



# **Friends of the Meadows** and Bruntsfield Links

N E W S L E T T E R 20  
**Autumn 2008**

From the Chairman

This year's Festival has come and gone, and at the beginning of September, the ground east of Middle Meadow Walk at the Melville Drive end was in a terrible state owing to the continuous use of this site by the Taste of Edinburgh, the Moonwalk, the Urban Circus, and the Festival Fun Fair. Your committee had many discussions about this and we agreed that in view of this damage, leading to the exclusion of public use, we will oppose any big events on this area in future, and ask that alternative sites are found from 2009 onwards.

### **Not all due to rainfall**

We contend that the damage from such events could not be ascribed to increased rainfall (one of our Committee members has carried out a survey over many years) or defective drainage (since new drains were installed at considerable expense a few years ago). We have had discussions with local Councillors (many of whom support us) and Parks officials (who had hitherto believed that some raking of the damaged earth and re-seeding would do) and we were pleased to see that re-turfing had been undertaken this year as a cosmetic measure, after repeated requests to do so. The problem is simply over-use of the site.

We have told Mr David Jamieson, the Head of the Parks Department, that we will oppose any application for Green Flag status for the Meadows as long as the annual damage to this section of the Meadows continues, and as a minimum have demanded a 'year's rest' for this area. The Council have apparently requested a report about a more effective and rational use of the Parks in Edinburgh for events, prompted by our demands that other green areas in the City share the burden of the many events in Edinburgh through the year, and we await the outcome of this report with interest.

### **Archers Hall**

Meanwhile, we have opposed the demolition of the corner Lodge of Archers Hall (by the tennis courts) and the partial demolition of the section of the wall adjacent to North Meadow Walk and to Boroughloch, and strongly support the views expressed in the letter overleaf from one of the residents of the old Boroughloch Breweries. On a positive note, the trees planted at the Middle Meadow Walk entrance to the Quartermile site have thrived better than expected, and we have asked Mr Mike Shields, the Meadows Parks Officer, to remind the University of Edinburgh that it has an obligation to re-plant mature trees on the other side of Middle Meadow Walk.

**If you can, please come to our autumn Meeting on November 3<sup>rd</sup> at 7.30 p.m. in the Library at St Thomas of Aquin's High School, 220 Chalmers Street: Mr David Jamieson, Parks and Greenspace Manager, is speaking at this meeting, and this is your chance to say what you think about the management of the Meadows and Links.**

**P L Yap**

## OVER-DEVELOPMENT IN EDINBURGH

There have been a large number of developments in Edinburgh and Leith over the last few years that do not seem to have the support of the local community, and which benefit only a small minority of people.

### Archers Hall

You may be aware that next to Boroughloch (a charming and eccentric old building with turrets), across Boroughloch Lane and facing straight on to the Meadows, is a long wall and sturdy old house that have been there for nearly two hundred years. Behind the wall is a professional bowling green, a period bowling pavilion, and the eighteenth-century Archers Hall. All this belongs to the Royal Company of Archers (an exclusive club with 500 members), who, apparently, need to find an 'income stream.' They argue that they can no longer safely preserve unspecified 'historic treasures' and that the only way to renovate their site is to develop it. They suggest that this will benefit the community: ie. archery clubs may be invited to the new development, and also anyone with enough money to hire the site as a corporate venue.

The Royal Company do not think that heritage bodies will be interested in helping them preserve their site and treasures, even though Archers Hall is B listed. On their behalf, architects have submitted plans for a 90-bed student accommodation building that will:

- 1) **destroy the wall**, replacing it with a two-storey student block (that 'looks like a wall', although if you see the plans you may remain unconvinced).
- 2) **destroy the lodge house** on the corner of the lane, and also the bowling pavilion. This lodge dates from the mid-19th century, probably earlier, and complements Boroughloch's architecture. This will be replaced by a four-storey student block, taller than the lodge house, which will cut out some light for the residents of Boroughloch. The council planning department, we are told, are not interested in vernacular architecture, so the new buildings will look not dissimilar to lego (in my opinion, having seen the plans).
- 3) **reduce the width of the historic bowling green** so it's not really a bowling green any more. Edinburgh Bowling Club has already been given notice.
- 4) **introduce 90 post-graduate students** to an area where the residents/student mix is already imbalanced.
- 5) **cause a massive increase in traffic** to Boroughloch Lane (cobble) and the wee lane behind, which are major pedestrian thoroughfares. For 18 months these two small lanes will provide the sole means for trucks etc to reach the site. After the site is finished no doubt students will bring their cars etc.

### Interesting points

- 1) Archers Hall is apparently located in a 'sterile' environment, i.e. surrounded by greenery.
- 2) The architects showed us plan after plan of how the development would look from Archers Hall, looking out, but were unable to show us the plan (in existence) of how the development will look from the Meadows, This is the view that 99.99% of Edinburgh residents will see.
- 3) I asked how long the modern development would last. First, the architect said 'many generations.' I said that this was not an answer so he said '60-100 years.' I have been told by another architect that modern buildings typically last between 30-40 years unless massive amounts of money are spent on them.
- 4) Only four flats in Boroughloch and Dunford house were told beforehand of the public meeting, which took place in the Southside Community Centre on 29 September 2008: residents were given only three days to lodge comments/objections.

**Hannah Adcock**, *Director, West Port Book Festival* [www.westportbookfestival.org](http://www.westportbookfestival.org)



*The above photo was taken by Dennis Gallagher on 7 August 2008 – one of many showing severe damage to the terrain.*

### **The economic case for an 'event-free' Meadows**

The remit of the Events Planning and Organization Group (EPOG) includes a city-wide economic promotion of Edinburgh. Edinburgh's local economy is surely big and strong enough to thrive without the assistance of the relatively small sums of revenue generated by 'events' in the Meadows.

On the contrary, there are both economic and other benefits to the city of **no** large-scale events on the Meadows. Visitors to the city remark that the Meadows – along with Arthur's Seat – are 'the jewels in the crown' of the city centre.

### **Peace and tranquillity**

The Meadows are at their best when it's peaceful: tranquil glory can be experienced without the disturbance of the sights and sounds of large-scale events. An analogy is if St Giles' Cathedral were to hire itself out as a nightclub on Saturday nights. How would we feel about that?

In the ever-increasing hustle and bustle of modern life, it is more important than ever that the 'green cathedral' that is the Meadows remains a place of peaceful beauty that brings refreshment to the souls of all human beings – local residents, and visitors from all over the world. The 'events' organizing committee should remain true to the original statute prohibiting commercial activity, in which the Meadows were given to the people of Edinburgh.

'You don't know what you have got till it's gone'!

*The writer of this article prefers to remain anonymous*

## Historical note

FOMBL Newsletter No. 8 contained an article headed 'A Short History of the Meadows' by Ian Nimmo. There are a few points worth noting.

Thomas Hope of Rankeillor is renowned for draining the Meadows, though he did not actually complete the task, as the article implies. His name is commemorated in the adjoining streets, Hope Park Terrace and Crescent, as the article says, but more than that: opening off North Meadow Walk is Hope Park Square, where Thomas Hope built a fine mansion-house in about 1740 as his home. Its imposing Dutch-style frontage still dominates the square.

To the impressive list of sports that have been played on the Meadows we may add curling – on proper curling rinks. The Royal Company of Archers do more than simply practise toxophily on the Meadows: they shoot for the Musselburgh Silver Arrow there every year.

The octagonal pillars at the west end of Melville Drive, dating from the Edinburgh International Exhibition of 1886, were erected by the Master Builders and Operative Masons not just of Edinburgh but also of Leith (the latter being a fiercely independent burgh). The Jawbone Arch, which now stands at the southern end of Jawbone Walk, was not simply presented by the Zetland and Fair Isle Knitting stand as the article states: it WAS their stand!

Finally, there is an annoying continuance of the misspelt 'Borough' Loch and 'Borough' Muir. I find it hard to understand why institutions like the Post Office and Watsonians cling to this Anglicized aberration. Let's keep the proper Scottish spelling: Burgh. **Graeme Cruickshank**

## Forthcoming event: Meadows Chamber Orchestra

Did you know that the Meadows had its very own chamber orchestra? Enclosed with this newsletter you will find their 2008-9 programme of concerts. Discounted tickets for the next concert on 30 November available from Heather Goodare at the FOMBL meeting on 3 November.

## Impressionism

Did you see the exhibition of Impressionist pictures (Scottish included) at the Academy during the summer? Not only were the pictures wonderful: so was the accompanying commentary. Members of FOMBL may be interested in the following extract from a note on the 1880s and 1890s:

'The pursuit of leisure activities was encouraged among the rising middle classes in Scotland as an antidote to boredom and the dangers of mixing with the lower orders. Croquet was recommended, since it required "the repression of vanity and sanguine impulses, and the power of concentration". The new sport of lawn tennis was also considered "a more humanising game than football, more sociable than cycling, more interesting than bowls":. Alcoholism was a major problem, especially among the working classes . . .'

**Ed.**

## Useful numbers

Mike Shields: Community Parks Officer 0131 672 1589  
Community Beat Officer PC 4601 Yocksan Bell 0131 662 5022 (to report a crime: 0131 311 3131; emergency 999; or anonymously to Crimestoppers: 0800 555 111)  
Anti-social behaviour (24/7): 0131 529 7050; Litter: rapid response 0808 100 33 66  
Defective lamp-post lighting: note number and report to Clarence – 0800 23 23 23  
Environmental Manager: David Doig – david.doig@edinburgh.gov.uk

**The Spring Meeting of Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links  
will be held on Monday 16 February 2009 at 7.30 p.m. in St Andrew's  
Orthodox Church (by the tennis courts)**

### **Committee members (please address all correspondence to the Secretary)**

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