



Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links

N E W S L E T T E R 23

November 2009

Convener's Comment

The Future of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links

The Friends should continue looking to the issue of the long-term future of both the Meadows and the Links. The past year's fight to keep the area green was a partial success. Some better limits have been placed on the commercial exploitation of the area.

We have to face the fact that the Council has always needed to be restrained. Back in 1827 Parliament had to step in to stop the sale of this Common Good land for building sites! Thanks are due to all who contributed to the long campaign of letters, postcards, posters, meetings, and delegations.

We now need to ensure that the new Management Group presses for long-term improvements to drainage and amenity (e.g. toilets, tree planting, seating), as well as day-to-day management (e.g. litter, graffiti, wear and tear of the turf, barbecues, cycling). Meanwhile, don't forget to renew your membership, come to the next meeting, and let us have your ideas.

Chris Wigglesworth

The Autumn Meeting of Friends of the Meadows & Bruntsfield Links will be held on Monday 16 November 2009 at 7.30 p.m. in the Barclay Viewforth Church hall (enter by the side door facing the Links). Speakers to include Local Historian Graeme Cruickshank, who will be talking about the history of Bruntsfield Links (see his 'taster' below). There will be an opportunity for a guided tour of this amazing building. All are welcome.

Bruntsfield Links

What exists today is but the surviving remnant of the extensive Burgh Muir – a valuable resource for the people of Edinburgh. It was not always empty land – hear about Muirs Burgh and Burgh Muir Castle.

Who were the wrights who occupied Wrights' Houses, and why were they here? Discover the significance of Ballop. Learn what caused the feature known as Tumblers Hollow (But not what lay behind the name – unless a member of FoMBL happens to know?). Most especially, be entertained by the story of golf on Bruntsfield Links.

Graeme Cruickshank



After the Evans Funfair (duration two weeks), 1 September 2009

The Circus on the Meadows (from 'One Good Turn' by Kate Atkinson: Doubleday 2006)

The circus on the Meadows didn't hold out the same promises and terrors as the circus of long ago. It was a Russian circus, although there was nothing particularly Russian about spinning plates, trapezes and high-wire work. Only the clowns acknowledged their national origins in an act based on Russian dolls – 'Matryoshka', it declared in the programme. . . Russian whispers. Secrets within secrets. Dolls within dolls.

The ringmaster . . . looked like ringmasters the world over, the black top hat, the red tailcoat, the whip – he looked more like he was about to orchestrate a foxhunt than MC a load of spangled kitsch. . . The circus, the programme also said, shared space with 'The LadyBoys of Bangkok'. Jackson was relieved some passing LadyBoy hadn't given Julia tickets for his/her show. . .

New readers start here

The year 2009 has been particularly busy for the Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links (FoMBL). Over the past few years we have been increasingly concerned about the conflict between big commercial events such as we see during the Festival period, and the normal use of the Meadows for football, cricket, and all sorts of informal leisure activities. After the Festival events left in 2008, nobody could ignore this any longer. A very large area east of Middle Meadow Walk had been devastated.

What is FoMBL for?

FoMBL exists to conserve, enhance and improve the landscape, biodiversity and sustainable use of the area for the benefit of people and wildlife, and to promote the area's facilities, so as to encourage sustainable use by the general public for their leisure and recreation, while endeavouring to reduce the impact of conflicting interests on the social and natural environment. That's what it says in our constitution, and that is what we try to do.

In the spring of 2009 we launched our 'Save Our Meadows' campaign to try and persuade the City of Edinburgh Council to adopt a more sustainable policy about who uses the Meadows. We knew that a new major policy document was in preparation, and so we printed 1000 postcards for members of the public to fill in and send to the Council expressing concern about the overuse of the Meadows by commercial events, and the damage it was doing to the area. We sent delegations to several Council meetings and managed to influence things a bit, but we are disappointed that the policy adopted still allows commercial events to stay on too long, and hence cause lots of damage.



After the Evans Funfair (duration two weeks), 1 September 2009

Long-term damage

We have seen over the last decade an increase in use of the Meadows for a variety of events. Experience has shown that the problem of long-term damage to the grass is caused by events that are on site for more than two weeks, and the use of heavy vehicles to construct large structures. The Meadows copes well with large crowds. People are not the problem!

Another area of conflict is that of barbecues. Remember the barbecue summer? It was around the end of May in 2009, when lots of people enjoyed the sunshine and went out on to the Meadows and the Links to eat, drink, and socialize. Barbecues were very popular. Some people lit them and placed them straight on the grass, and you can see the burnt patches still. It takes at least two years for these patches to recover. These are just some of the issues that we need to address.

Hilary McDowell

This is a slightly shortened version of an article in the current Meadows Directory. It is reproduced by kind permission of the Editor.

Cycling on the Meadows

Love them or loathe them, cyclists are improving their profile in Edinburgh. Now that they may cycle on all paths on the Meadows except Coronation Walk, Boys Brigade Walk, and Jawbone Walk (though the restriction here is widely ignored), all path users need to respect the rights of others. Walkers should welcome cyclists, who are at least not using cars and adding to global warming. Cyclists should respect walkers, pram-pushers and wheelchairs, who cannot always get out of their way in a hurry.

The role of Spokes

Spokes is the Lothian Cycle Campaign, whose current Bulletin (no. 105) gives news of a proposed 'Cycling Super-Corridor', from Mayfield through the Meadows. Plans include cycle lanes at east Melville Drive. Further measures proposed include a signed and improved side-road route leading to Middle Meadow Walk, as well as the main-road route.

FoMBL can only applaud the increase in cycling in Edinburgh: this has to be good for the environment. We do ask Spokes however to campaign also for responsible cycling that obeys the rules of the road: no cycling down one-way streets, no cycling on the grass, and no speeding down hills on the Meadows in a manner to terrify old ladies. Even more important, use lights after dark, and respect traffic signals: the evenings are rapidly drawing in!
Ed.

STOP PRESS: Edinburgh Parks Events Manifesto

On 3rd November the City of Edinburgh Council Policy and Strategy Committee considered the draft Edinburgh Parks Events Manifesto, which 'is intended to allow a strategic and proactive approach to the planning and managing of events within Edinburgh's parks and greenspaces. It establishes a set of guidelines tailored to each individual park, which provide a framework on which a balanced and sustainable events programme can be achieved, whilst ensuring that the quality of the land is maintained to the highest standard possible.' The Manifesto also states that the 'strategic sites' for which there is greatest demand from event organizers are Princes Street Gardens, the Meadows, Calton Hill and Inverleith Park.

However, for grass sites *only the Meadows are subject to a maximum of four weeks per event* (even though the Council's own consultation exercise found that all stakeholders except one – the Urban Circus - recommended a maximum of two weeks). Princes Street Gardens are restricted to five days maximum on grass, Calton Hill to seven days on grass, and Inverleith Park (with three times the area of the Meadows) to fifteen days maximum.

The photos on pp 2 and 3 show the rutting and flooding near the Pavilion after the Evans Funfair occupied the adjacent site for only two weeks. The Council Committee accepted the Manifesto, which will now go out to consultation among the interested bodies. The papers can be accessed on the Council website: See also the FoMBL website (www.fombl.org.uk) for a link.

Forthcoming events on or near the Meadows

Meadows Chamber Orchestra

The next concert of this popular orchestra will be in the Queen's Hall on Sunday 29 November at 7.45 p.m. The programme is entirely composed of works by Bach and Stravinsky, with Alexander Janiczek directing and also playing solo violin. Bach's Brandenburg concertos 1 and 3, as well as two violin concertos, in A minor and E, are contrasted with two lesser known works by Stravinsky, the Concerto in D for string orchestra and the concertino for 12 instruments. Please see the enclosed leaflet for the orchestra's current programme of concerts.

The Spring Meeting of Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links will probably be held on Monday 8 February 2009 at 7.30 p.m. Venue yet to be decided.

Useful numbers

Mike Shields: Community Parks Officer 0131 529 5126

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

FOMBL Committee members

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