



Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links

Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organization (SCIO) SC045955

NEWSLETTER 58

Summer 2021

New Trustees for FoMBL Required!

Members are invited to join as trustees. Also required is a new secretary. Ideal for someone who cares about maintaining this important green space. The work involves taking minutes at meetings (every two months), updating the online archive, sending Mailchimp notices, helping organise meetings etc. Currently, all our meetings are online.

Projects Update

1. Playgrounds

FoMBL have been working with CEC Alan Gevers to provide more equipment for younger children. The latest installation is a new see-saw at the toddlers' playground adjacent to the tennis courts. Some additional equipment and possible replacement of ageing items are in the longer term plan. The recently installed trampoline has been a great success at the Links playground. We are now working to establish a new playground for toddlers at the South Links fenced area off Whitehouse Loan. We are applying for a community grant and the local nursery has committed £4000.

2. Interpretive boards for the Meadows.

This project is jointly run by FoMBL and EWH who are both funding it. The proposal is to install up to eight new boards designed to give a particular character and design to reflect the unique character and history of the meadows. A first phase of 4-5 boards will hopefully be completed this year.

3. Jawbones

An engineer has been appointed by EWH to design the support foundations that will be required. Due partly to structural problems, the Jawbones will not be erected this year. We are pushing for the metal railing to be re-instated as soon as possible.

4. Wildflower meadows and reduced mowing

FoMBL and a team of volunteers continue to work on the two wildflower meadows at Leamington Walk and South Links fenced area. Plugs were planted this Spring along with seeding. Increasing numbers of volunteers have been involved and it is hoped that more wildflower areas can be established. We have organised the installation of a new wildflower meadow information board at the Leamington Walk meadow.

5. Commemorative bench at Bruntsfield Terrace pedestrian area.

The teak bench has now been restored with the help of a community grant and is now installed. A plaque funded by MCC in memory of Robin Morris has been fixed to the bench.



Memorial Bench Unveiling

Robin Morris, who died in 2018, was a super-active campaigner for his local community. Frequently to be seen around Morningside and Bruntsfield picking up litter, or chatting to local people about local issues, Robin was ideally placed for formal involvement with Merchiston Community Council, on which he served for twenty years, first as Secretary, then Vice Chair, then Chair. He was also an active member of FoMBL and had become its Treasurer shortly before his death. The bench will mark his many contributions to the local area.

The photo shows Robin's widow Roz seated left on the bench, surrounded by some of his family, friends and colleagues. Heather Goodare, past Convener and Newsletter Editor of FoMBL, is seated far right.

Bridget Stevens

6. Table Tennis Table near East Meadows toilets



With the help of a community grant and team work involving FoMBL and an interested volunteer (James McGinley) a new table tennis table has been installed in the area to the south of the East Meadows toilet and behind the tennis/play area pavilion. The table was successfully installed on 20th July and has already been very popular with many games taking place.

7. Tree Group

The FoMBL tree group now meet every Friday and replace rotten/broken tree posts and fix protective cages where necessary. We have funded pressure treated support posts and other tools and equipment mainly to care for the hundreds of young trees throughout the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links.



The FoMBL volunteer tree group repairing broken cages, replacing rotten posts and widening cages which restrict growth and damage lower branches. If you are interested in joining the tree group, we meet most Fridays at the Cricket Pavilion at 2.30pm.

8. Monthly volunteers

There has been a marked increase in the number of volunteers turning up on the last Saturday of the month so much has been achieved in the way of litter picking, watering (during dry spells), path edge clearing, leaf collecting, graffiti removal and tree work etc.

9. Cricket Pavilion

Edinburgh Leisure have granted the cafe a lease for this summer but it looks like the council will market it as a repairing lease for next year. FoMBL are keen to be involved in the pre-tender briefing stages. There is concern over provision of toilets, condition of buildings and usage of the rear garden area.

Neil Roger 21/06/21

FoMBL Volunteers working



Neil Roger, Joan Carter, Martin Howorth, Alec Mann - removing docks at South Links wildflower area.

This is a very hard job as docks have to be ideally removed with the whole root which is not easy. Seed heads are removed before seeding. This enables many wild flowers to survive which would normally be cut by the mower. Docks are ok in small numbers but can take over and swamp other plants. More volunteers needed for further dock pulling and seed cutting!

Neil Roger

Rare elm trees in the Meadows

(From a member of a small research group studying elms across the globe.)

In 1989 in my early years as an elm researcher I found some very interesting elms on The Meadows and Bruntsfield Links. The survey which I carried out was followed up in recent years by a colleague, Alex Zambellas, and he has discovered that there is a very important collection of elms dotted around Edinburgh including some on The Meadows and Bruntsfield Links.

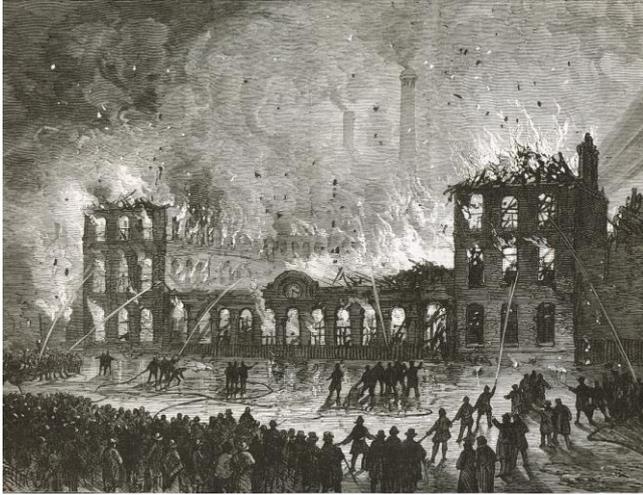
Some of these rare elms are mentioned on Wikipedia under *Ulmus* (elm) along with pictures. These trees are the only genepool of the original collection held by the infamous world experts on elm, Spaeth Nurseries in Berlin. Spaeth's lost all but one tree of its original collection owing to World War 2 and Dutch elm disease but prior to this in 1902 sent three trees of all its entire stock for planting in Edinburgh which to this day are still to be found.

The significance of this collection is profoundly important in regards to elm cultivars and include the two weeping elm trees at Holyrood Palace identified a few years ago by myself for Edinburgh RBG. I am currently seeking ways to make a National Elm Collection for Scotland in order to preserve these valuable trees before Dutch elm disease claims them.

Regards, Peter Bourne

(Volunteer Curator of the National Elm Collection, UK in Brighton and Hove & Elm Research)

The Story of the Nelson Pillars



Thomas Nelson & Sons

Thomas Neilson, later spelt Nelson, (1780-1861) opened a second-hand bookshop at West Bow in 1798. He started printing books and moved to a larger premises at Castle Hill. This became such a success that Thomas and his sons William and Thomas junior acquired a site to build a purpose made printing works at Hope Park End (now Hope Park Crescent) in 1843. In 1850 Thomas junior invented the Rotary Press, which revolutionised printing, and the Nelson works expanded to become the largest printing and publishing house in Scotland.

In 1878 a huge fire completely destroyed the Hope Park works. (*See contemporary picture above.*) At that time Nelson's was of major importance to the Edinburgh economy, employing around 600 workers. The City of Edinburgh, in recognizing this, provided Nelson's with a temporary site opposite the destroyed works at the east end of the Meadows. The new printing presses allowed the business to continue until a permanent location was found. Luckily all the original plates were stored in fireproof safes and survived the fire.

Fortunately the ideal site was soon acquired nearby, adjacent to Holyrood Park on Parkside, fronting Old Dalkeith Road. The new building opened in 1880 and the temporary printing works were removed from the Meadows. In the same year William and Thomas junior commissioned the design of these two pillars in gratitude to the City and people of Edinburgh for providing a site to enable them to continue printing after the 1878 fire. The printing works were demolished in the 1970s and the 'A' listed Scottish Widows office opened in 1976. As for Nelson's, the publishing business was, after several owners, acquired by HarperCollins and, in 2019, trades under the name 'Thomas Nelson' in Tennessee, USA.

Neil Roger

Temporary Toilets in the Meadows

The temporary toilets were delivered to the Meadows on 15 June. They are located just off the Middle Meadow Walk at the area usually used for the main events. They have been connected to the services (including a generator). The safety checks are passed and they have been operational from 21 June. There are three units (for male, female and disabled access, and they are open from 10am until 8pm.

Unfortunately we've had to temporarily close the toilets at Bruntsfield Links due to issues with the drainage. Plumbers visited the site at the end of last week to investigate. They have identified an issue approximately 11 metres from the manhole in the street we've therefore had to contact Scottish Water to ask them to investigate and repair as appropriate.

If you require any further information please contact my colleague who is managing this project, Karen Reeves karen.reeves@edinburgh.gov.uk.

Sarah Murphy, City of Edinburgh Council

Book Review

Heather Goodare, *Foiled Creative Fire: a study of remarkable women with breast cancer* (Ashwood Books, Tasmania, 2020)

Pp.165 + ix, incl. index. Paperback £9.95, Kindle £4.98

It is always gratifying to have one of our own do well, and Heather Goodare has pulled off something of a triumph here. She will be well-known to many FoMBL members, having been our Convener for a number of years, and Newsletter Editor for even longer. Coming from a literary background and professionally involved in the publication business, it is no surprise that when she became enmeshed in a topic for which she developed a burning passion, she would write a book about it. It has been two decades in gestation.

The title was acquired from a 1937 poem by W. H. Auden, who had promoted the notion which lies at the heart of this study; the subtitle explains what this version of the phrase is all about in this instance. A dozen notable women, ranging from a 17th-century Queen of France to a 20th-century Scottish artist, have been selected to have their stories told, in some detail, and with considerable zest. According to one professorial judgement on Heather's work, it is 'so exciting and well-written that it reads like a novel'! A word of praise is due also to Jonathan Sturm, who produced the volume and designed the eye-catching cover.

Heather herself is a breast cancer survivor from 35 years ago, a circumstance which triggered her intense interest in the subject. Her own story, along those of others who belonged to the Bristol Breast Cancer Survey, may be found in the book she edited in 1996 called *Fighting Spirit*. She found herself ideally placed to issue a general discourse on this topic, as in addition to her publishing background, she served as the first patient representative on the *British Medical Journal* Editorial Board, and then chaired the organisation Breast Cancer UK for five years.

Her basic thesis here is that stress and emotional upheavals can contribute not only to the onset of breast cancer, but also to the patients' ability to recover from it, which provides a uniquely original slant on the topic. Her summation of the ways in which a person (most often a woman) can be affected by the condition is that 'life has lost its lustre, that creativity is stifled, and that there is no way out of the impasse'. It is to her great credit that she did not allow herself to be engulfed by such negative factors, fighting them off with her indomitable spirit.

Throughout the book, there are undercurrents of another of Heather's passions ~ feminism. Perhaps her own story should be part of the collection, and in a way it is, in the form of a mini-appendix tucked away at the end, modestly hiding in the guise of a biographical note. It is accompanied by a charming photograph of the author at the helm of a sailing yacht, serenely cruising on the Norfolk Broads, emitting a sense of quiet confidence and hidden strength which is very much her trade-mark.

The book has attracted widespread interest, and provided the subject matter for an in-depth interview with Heather on UK Health Radio (a recording of which is available on the Internet). It was conducted by Robin Daly, the chair and founder of 'Yes to Life', who described her as 'one of the heroes of our movement'. He emphasised the important, indeed vital, contribution which Heather has made with both of her books towards a recognition of the causal link between acute mental stress and the development of cancer.

Heather admits that her list of women could well be expanded, and she even names some of these additional candidates in her Introduction. (One such is the marvellous 1960s singer Dusty Springfield, who is accorded a full paragraph there ~ would that she had made it into the Premier League.) With that thought very much in mind, she concludes with the poignant comment 'this book is just a beginning', though one gets the impression that Heather, now approaching 90 years of age, is looking for someone else to pick up the baton which she has run with so effectively.

Graeme Cruickshank

Membership price increase

The new membership fee for Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links will be £8.00, although students and young people will still pay £5.00. It is possible to pay online by credit card. Remember to gift aid your payment if you are a taxpayer. Corporate membership will go up from £10 to £15. If you already pay by standing order, please remember to update your payment details.

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 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 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

Convener: Jim Orr, email: convener@fombl.org.uk

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

Treasurer: email: fombltreas@fombl.org.uk

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Martin Howorth, email: howorthmartin2@gmail.com

Tollcross Community Council: Iain Black, **Southside CC:** Joan Carter, Kaaren Houghton, **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

