



# Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links

Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organization (SCIO) SC045955

## NEWSLETTER 61

Summer 2022

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### Wildflower meadow in bloom



Volunteers at the Links wildflower meadow last year, showing successful growth.

*(Photo taken by BBC Countryfile photographer.)*

Unfortunately this year the dry weather and children running through the meadow have resulted in far fewer flowers.

Volunteers planted many plugs which we had hoped will grow once more rain comes.

*Neil Roger*



On 11th August 2022 council mowers cut the Leamington Walk wildflower meadow prematurely which resulted in many flowering plants being cut far too early.

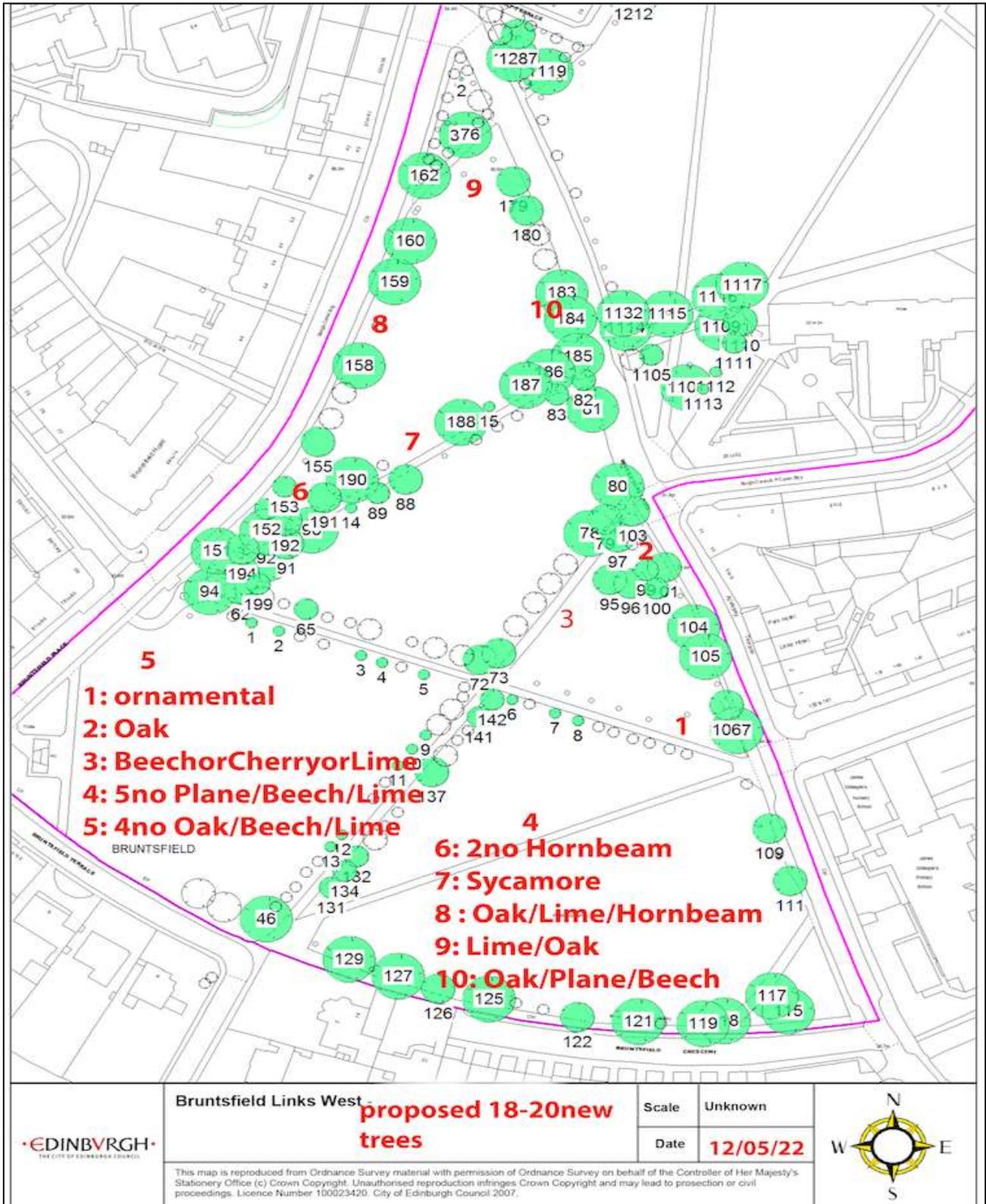
Peter Watson, who is in charge of mowing, apologised and explained it was an error by a new driver who was not familiar with the cutting regime.

Alec and Tim had to rake the cuttings which were removed by Mike's park keepers.

Mike agreed to supply 100 wild carrot and 100 scabious which will have to be planted in the spring.

*Neil Roger*

# Proposed new tree planting in Bruntsfield Links South



The map shows where we hope to plant new trees in the autumn.

*Neil Roger*

## Volunteer report

Volunteers have continued to do sterling work on the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links every last Saturday of the month between 10am and 12 noon. No matter what the weather we have people turning out to enhance the public space. The core activities are always litter picking and graffiti removal. However volunteers have been regularly involved with the wildflower meadows which need good attention at certain critical times of year. The lack of rain has been an issue. Volunteers have also cleared up around benches – trimming back encroaching turf from the concrete bases and attempting to remove cigarette ends and bottle tops, which are small and numerous. The problem of overflowing rubbish bins continues to create mess as well as seagulls adding to the problem as they pull food debris out of bins. As we look forward to the autumn we hope more people will join the sessions as there is always much to do.

*Alison Carr*

## Tree watering



FoMBL tree group have been watering young trees throughout the summer using a water bowser.

This has been a laborious job and the lack of suitable water sources has not helped.

Unfortunately, despite our efforts, at least five young trees have died.

We have now secured access to the two public toilets where we can fill the bowser closer to nearby trees which we hope to plant in the Autumn.

*Neil Roger*

## Dock removal



Gary and his friend are Chinese students who helped out removing docks (*Rumex crispus*) from the Leamington Walk meadow. The dock seeds have to be bagged to prevent them dropping onto the ground. Although birds love the seeds, docks tend to spread and smother other plants.

*Neil Roger*



Saturday work group clearing rubbish from the Helen Acquroff fountain.

## **Friends of the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links AGM 24 June 2022**

### **thecockburnassociation**

**The use and misuse of public space in Edinburgh:**  
summary of a talk by Terry Levinthal, Director, The Cockburn Association



'An alarming instance of the insecurity of the beauty of Edinburgh or of the preservation of its scenes of recreation' wrote Henry Cockburn in 1843 on the announcement that the Town Council resolved that the Hallow Fair should be held on Bruntsfield Links. 'The effect of which would have been that an annual nuisance would be fastened on to the best-used playground in Edinburgh, and that the excellent old turf would have been destroyed', he declared.

The use and abuse of Edinburgh's civic spaces, its parks and its gardens are not new. Active use of such amenities is to be encouraged, but many people living in the city today are unaware of past threats and abuses to the open spaces in the city. For example, East Princes Street Gardens might have had a bus station and multi-storey car park and West Princes Street Gardens could have been anything from a housing estate to a carnival to a site of the Usher Hall or various other ideas, none of which included a public garden. 'Edinburgh is not exempt from the doom that makes everything spoilable', said Cockburn in his seminal Letter to the Lord Provost on the Best Ways of Spoiling the Beauty of Edinburgh.

The Cockburn Association was founded in 1875 for 'preserving and increasing the attractions of the City and its neighbourhood, and to commemorate the exertions made by the late Lord

Cockburn to promote these objects' (from the 1875 Requisition by Citizens of Edinburgh to the Lord Provost). As with its namesake, it has taken great interest in the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links since its inception.

In the Annual Report of 1876–77, trees in Bruntsfield Links are mentioned in the context of the feuing of Sir George Warrender's ground for development which would have involved the felling of the trees which bound the Links on the SE side. The Cockburn Association advocated for the retention and extension of this line of trees to the eastern section of the Links. They reported in 1879 that the Meadows 'is a boon to all classes in their neighbourhood' and the Cockburn would 'depreciate any steps which would render them less free and open to the public'.

In perhaps the first attempt to 'privatise' the Meadows, in the 1880s, a proposal to turn the West Meadows into a cricket and football ground was considered. The Cockburn Council of the time said, 'such a proposal would be very unwise, as the whole of the Meadows would thus be given up to sports, depriving people, women and children of a safe airing ground'.

Commodification of public space has been a core issue for the Cockburn. Parks, gardens and civic spaces are increasingly viewed as an exploitable resource, especially by the Festival and tourism/events sector. The process of 'Festivalisation' is one that has been actively studied by academics. It starts with a positive idea that the use of open space is a good thing and engaging activities are to be welcomed.

Recent trends for use of festivals and events in urban contexts is growing internationally with the increased use of temporary venues and pop-up structures in civic space as a feature of the process. Whilst festivals accentuate drama, they can restructure public space from a 'Use Value' basis to an 'Exchange Value' basis with a shift from citizen to consumer as focus for public policy. The result is a change in attitude – symbolic spaces become saleable as assets. Festivals and events become the Trojan Horse for new management ethos, normalising public space becoming an event space (commodified). This, in turn, normalises access restrictions and sets a precedent for more and more events based on exclusivity of access. Public space is privatised, even if only temporarily.

Americans use the word 'gentrification' to describe this process. Those who can participate need to have the resources to do so. The space is gentrified in favour of those who can pay. When the Cockburn objected in 1880 to sports clubs fencing off areas of the Meadows for their own purposes to the exclusion of public access, this was what was in mind. If they hadn't, who knows what might be there now – a Tynecastle or Easter Road stadium? No chance for a kick about for the masses, then!

*Terry Levinthal*

## Historical view



A postcard view looking south through the Meadows, with the ladies of 1900 wearing their fine dresses. Perhaps some of these trees are still growing now.

## **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.

Autumn (date tbc)      Online Zoom Forum: The Early History of Hibs and Hearts on the Meadows

## **Useful Contacts**

**Mike Shields**, Parks and Greenspace Officer South East (Edinburgh Council). Tel: 0131 529 5126 or email: [mike.shields@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:alan.dunlop@edinburgh.gov.uk)

**Task Force Manager** (responsible for street cleaning and grounds maintenance) Rab Farquhar. Email: [rab.farquhar@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto: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](mailto: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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