



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

Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) SC045955

## **NEWSLETTER 66 Spring 2024**

### **FoMBL AGM**

**Friday 28th June**

**At the Croquet Centre at 6pm**

**Speaker: Professor David Purdie**

**on**

**'The Burnses, father & son, and the Meadows'**

**[The son being our national poet Robert Burns]**

### **FRIENDS OF THE MEADOWS & BRUNTSFIELD LINKS**

#### **SPRING TALK - Report**

Our 2024 SPRING TALK took place on 22 April in Barclay Viewforth Church on Bruntsfield Links. Given by retired teacher of History and Modern Studies, Eric Melvin, former Head Teacher at Currie Community High School, author of several books on Edinburgh history, and an Edinburgh Festival Voluntary Guide, it was a superb talk, hugely enjoyed by the audience of 80.

Entitled *Tales of The Southside – Four Cameos*, Mr Melvin shared with us some of his encyclopaedic knowledge and his love of local history under the following intriguing sub-headings: **A Misadventure; An Eccentric Judge; An Afternoon Tea Party and Some Childhood Memories** - all generously illustrated.

A large amount of ground was covered but with an endearingly light touch and plenty of humour. What made Eric's talk particularly unique and enjoyable were his references to controversy (where exactly did the famous meeting between Walter Scott and Robert Burns take place?) and family connections (with Napiers the herbalists).

There was a small display of Eric's books and also handouts illustrating FoMBL's current and recent activities.

*Bridget Stevens*

## TREE GROUP

The Tree group has been very active during the autumn and winter with a steady group of regular volunteers turning up every Friday as well as over the two weeks of planting with schoolchildren in January.



Tree planting at Bruntsfield Links in January/February.

The planting of 14 new trees has now completed the new avenue (Whitehouse Loan to Bruntsfield Terrace) which we started last winter. A further 36 were planted throughout Bruntsfield Links.

## **Hedgerow/copse planting by local schoolchildren, FoMBL volunteers and CEC Parks**

Around 2000 trees and bushes have now been planted with a further 400 being planted during March by schoolchildren from Preston Street, Tollcross and Bruntsfield Primaries as well as pupils from James Gillespie's. This is a new experiment to provide a new environment for wildlife. We hope this will become a regular project every year, and maintenance will be ongoing after planting, needing many active volunteers!

We are planting close to achieve a dense hedge/copse where the public can't easily enter (like a normal field hedge). The result will provide a habitat for birds and insect life as well as all the microorganisms which will flourish within a biodiverse system.

Berry/fruit and nut producing trees such as rowan, alder, hazel and crab apple will grow above the bushes (holly, dog rose, elder, hawthorn, blackthorn etc) to provide birds with essential food as well as a safe place to survey the food below.

In addition such planting absorbs huge amounts of carbon dioxide which will be of particular relevance alongside the highly polluting Bruntsfield Place. Dense copses will provide some shelter from prevailing winds.

The Friday Tree Group followed up by completing the mulching of all newly planted trees and bushes. Further mulching of most of the young trees was carried out by FoMBL member Alistair Cant who also mapped the planted trees throughout the Links and Meadows.

Thanks to many volunteers including Martin, Mihaela, Neil, Clive, Alistair, Alastair and Ion.

*Neil Roger*



Trees and shrubs planted at South Links by local schoolchildren



Creating a hedgerow at South Links



Planting in the rain



More photographs of children involved in planting trees in the Meadows and Bruntsfield Links with Neil Roger and FoMBL Tree Group.

## Sculptor offers to pay for Jawbones to go to Shetland



*Photo: jawbones being dismantled in 2014*

A sculptor with family links to the jawbone arch which was gifted from Shetland to Edinburgh in the late 1800s has offered to pay towards the cost of bringing the bones back north. Helen Pollock, who lives in New Zealand, said the four jawbones would be a 'magnificent exhibit' inside or outside a museum in Shetland. But she has also offered to help The City of Edinburgh Council restore the bones in the first instance if it decides to reinstall them. However this appears to be very unlikely.

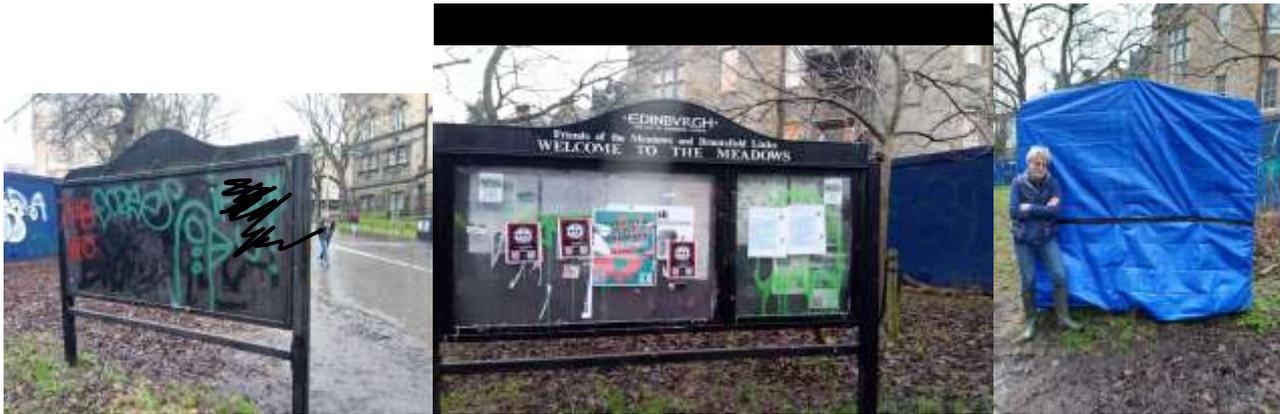
A report to councillors says officers will move to suggest installation of a jawbone arch interpretation panel at the site with – potentially – a surviving section included. However no final decision on disposing of the remainder of the bones will be actioned until concerns from Edinburgh World Heritage have been discussed in more detail.

The whale bones stood tall in an arch for more than a century at the Meadows in Edinburgh, forming a unique landmark at an entrance to the park – getting the nickname 'jawbone walk'. The bones formed part of a Shetland and Fair Isle Knitters stand at an international exhibition of science and art at the Meadows in 1886. They were then gifted to the city by the knitters. But in the mid-2010s the arch was taken down over safety fears, and last year Edinburgh councillors were told the condition of the bones was deteriorating further. The bones also have 25 centimetre wide bronze bands bearing the inscription 'The Zetland and Fair Isle Knitters Edinburgh Exhibition 1886'.

There have been campaigns in the past to conserve the bones, including from the Edinburgh World Heritage organisation. Pollock said she is a descendant of the Colvin family of Lerwick, with her late relatives running the old knitting business Schoor and Muir in the centre of town. They coordinated the Shetland and Fair Isle knitters taking the four whale bones to the exhibition in Edinburgh in 1886, making a 'tent like structure' to exhibit their knitting. 'They attracted the interest of international visitors, and buyers, including royalty, and they obtained Royal patronage for the knitters and the Schoor and Muir shop in Lerwick,' she explained.

*Chris Cope, Shetland News 28 February 2024*

## Vandalised notice boards



FoMBL has had continual problems with the damage done to the notice boards around the park, which have been sprayed by graffiti and had posters glued to them hiding our information.

The FoMBL noticeboard at the top of Middle Meadow Walk has proved quite a headache despite the good intentions of siting it in that location. It has been repeatedly and consistently targeted by different groups. It has become an eyesore unfortunately, sending out quite the wrong message about FoMBL. Volunteers have spent much time and thought trying to clean off paint, glue, posters and tape. They have tried various different substances to remove glue and paint but the perspex gets damaged very easily. They have tried putting a layer of fablon onto the perspex to protect it and enable cleaning. Nothing has succeeded. Unfortunately volunteers have come to the conclusion that the actual design of the noticeboard is poor.

It has now been decided that the Council will remove the noticeboard at Middle Meadow Walk and it will be kept to be relocated. A new 'welcome' board with a map of the Meadows is planned and already funded by EWH and ourselves.

*Alison Carr*

## Proposed new toilets for the Meadows

Recent meetings with City of Edinburgh Council and FoMBL confirm that new public accessible and disabled toilets will be installed in three parks including the Meadows. FoMBL asked for a lockable store for our use. They will be of modular design with individual doors for each cubicle. It is expected that they will be completed by the end of this year. The proposed site for the Meadows toilets is adjacent to the Cricket Pavilion. We have also asked for a water tap to fill the bowsers for watering new trees to help them survive through dry spells.

*Neil Roger*

## BENCH PROJECT



FoMBL have now raised funds and managed the restoration of three wooden benches and installed two new ones.

Greg Michaelson and family funded the restoration of this bench in the Meadows toddlers' playground in memory of their parents Sid and Kitty Michaelson. The joiner, Richard Ryrko, did a splendid job as usual.

*Neil Roger*



## **Open Day at the Meadows Croquet Club**

The Meadows Croquet Club open day is on Saturday 18 May. You can come along at any time between 1.00 pm and 4.00 pm. We will explain the game, give you a mallet and show you how to play. It's great fun and a game for all ages. It's also an opportunity to find out what's behind the hedge!

The club has about a hundred members and we've been on the present site for over twenty years. We have three full-size lawns, provide all the equipment, and play both association croquet and golf croquet. You can find out more about us and the game of croquet on our website <https://meadowscroquet.org.uk/index.php>

## **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.

- 14 May - TTCE 5K Fun Run 2024 7.00-8.00am: Blast Running
- 29 May-2 June - Meadows Festival: East Meadows
- 14 June - Edinburgh Arrows: The Edinburgh Arrow, 12.00-18.30
- 29 June - Edinburgh Climate Festival -
- 14 July - Edinburgh Rathayatra Festival 2024 Indian Cultural Event - 12.00: ISKCON Scotland

## **Useful Contacts**

**David Kyles:** Parks and Greenspace Officer South East (Edinburgh Council). Tel: 0131 529 5126 or email: David.Kyles@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:** <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) (*new contact to be confirmed*)

**Environmental Warden team leader:** Paul Baxter, Tel. 0131 529 5204; or 608 1100

### ***FoMBL Trustees***

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

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

**Other FoMBL Contacts:**

**Webmaster:** Philip McDowell, Website: [www.fombl.org.uk](http://www.fombl.org.uk)

