

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

## **ANNUAL REPORT 2016-17**

### **Charitable status**

This has been our first full year as a charity, and it has been successful in many ways. First of all, we have finally managed to achieve a substantial grant from Edinburgh Council, Parks and Greenspace Department, representing some of the revenue from last year's major event on the Meadows. While we continue to campaign for events to last only 15 days, as in other Edinburgh parks, we are nevertheless grateful for the £17,000 we have received, much of which we have already spent on improvements to the Meadows and Links. So far this has consisted of children's play equipment and adult gym apparatus, and in preparation are several items on our Heritage Trail: information boards for the Helen Acqueroff Memorial Fountain, the Sundial, the Masons' Pillars and the Nelson Pillars, and also the old Royal Infirmary, in collaboration with Quartermile. We continue to work on these projects.

### **Gardening on the Meadows**

While our new Community Garden, in collaboration with Greening our Street, and funded by the South Central Neighbourhood Partnership, has given rise to a certain amount of controversy (some were worried that it might be too much like an allotment), in the event it has proved successful, and has generated a good deal more voluntary work of an intergenerational nature. Children from Sciennes Primary School have also been helping. We await developments, and of course the harvest of produce.

### **Voluntary work**

During the year we have once again been able to work with Primary 6 children from George Heriot's during the autumn, gathering leaves especially round the Mural, where owing to the prevailing westerly winds they tend to collect. We also planted bulbs with the children in hollow tree stumps near by, and did some tree feathering (a responsible job involving loppers). The children really seem to enjoy this work, and we look forward to more sessions with them in the coming year.

Joe Boyle, in his last year of his university course, has been organising further voluntary work on the last Saturday of every month, and besides a stint at the Community Garden, lifting turf which was used to mend bare patches (especially barbecue burns), and helping with planting, much other work was done: trimming path edges, feathering trees, weeding under benches, replanting tubs at Bruntsfield, and also seeding the wild-flower patch adjoining Leamington Walk, under the supervision of Tim Duffy, whose special project it is. We are sorry to lose Joe, but very pleased that Yusuf Samari, just about to embark on a PhD, is able to take over.

### **Whalebone Arch**

It is now two years since we were promised that the Jawbones would be restored without delay, in October 2015. The situation is now becoming somewhat farcical, giving rise to a satirical article in our current newsletter. However, members will need to see the statement from Edinburgh World Heritage, as follows:

The project has taken longer than initial studies anticipated, due to a number of factors including the complexity of conserving 'organic' whalebone, and the going into liquidation of a specialist conservation company, which was working on the project. Once restored, the Jawbone Arch will return to the Meadows, and this important Edinburgh landmark will be in place for people to enjoy for another hundred years.

### **Public meetings**

As usual, we have held three public meetings during the past year. At our AGM on 17 June 2016 our speaker was Ian Murray MP, the only Labour MP in the whole of Scotland at the time, his constituency bordering the Meadows and Links to the south.

In the autumn, meeting at the German Church, Chalmers Crescent, on 18 November 2016, we had a fascinating talk from Martin Hyman about sport on the Meadows. Martin (an Olympic runner in days gone by) still coaches running on the Meadows weekly on Tuesday evenings.

In the spring, on 6th March, we had a very interesting meeting at Archers' Hall, Buccleuch Street, a most beautiful venue, when our speaker on the history of the Archers was Lt-Col. Richard Callander, OBE, TD, Secretary of the Royal Company of Archers. We were also able to celebrate the installation of the street name 'Archers Walk' on the Meadows, and since then signs have also been installed for 'South Meadow Walk'. Graeme Cruickshank continues to work on the project of new names for un-named paths, and we are particularly keen to include the names of famous Scottish women, especially on the southern Links, where only Leamington Walk is named so far. Any suggestions will be welcomed.

### **Meadows and Bruntsfield Links Advisory Group (MABLAG)**

This group was disbanded (as anticipated) last year by the South Central Neighbourhood Partnership, with the message to FoMBL that we could take over the role of liaison with local community councils. So we have accepted the challenge, calling ourselves Ex-MABLAG, and have held several meetings since last August, where we have discussed matters of mutual interest. High on the agenda has been the matter of toilets: there is a serious need for a new (or rather re-built) toilet at the Pavilion, which at the moment has only one small unisex toilet for the cricketers, footballers, café customers, café staff, and passers-by, especially the disabled and those with children. We are campaigning at present for a feasibility study, to investigate the drainage, and are also of course investigating the matter of funding.

### **Committee meetings**

Your committee of Trustees has continued to meet regularly. We have been delighted to welcome two new key members: our Secretary, Sarah Tolley, also Secretary of Greening our Street, and our Treasurer, Robin Morris, who is also Chair of Merchiston Community Council, with a long history of community service as well as much activity on the golf courses of Edinburgh. Philip McDowell continues to mastermind our website, most efficiently. As Convener I hope to be replaced soon. We would also welcome a Trustee who could act as Publicity Manager.

### **Membership**

We have benefited hugely from the increased membership of the students in Wrights Houses, and recent contacts with Quartermile lead us to expect more members from residents there. Our Membership Secretary, Alec Mann, continues to keep our membership list, and he will be very pleased to hear from anyone attending our AGM who is not already a member, and from those of you who would like to renew membership. Donations under Gift Aid are most welcome. *Heather Goodare*