

# Friends of Inverleith Park

OUR update on YOUR Park

Issue 22 Spring 2014

To join Friends of Inverleith Park click on <http://www.inverleithpark.co.uk/> and go to Membership or phone Treasurer, Joan Beattie at 556 7993.



Do let us know if you have any opinions or ideas for the park. You can send us a message on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Save-Inverleith-Park>, or ring our convener, Pam Barnes at 332 4765, or come to our monthly meeting in the Sundial Garden on the first Tuesday of the month. We are always glad to hear what people think.

## Nature Walk Diary



*We are again running 3 nature walks over the summer season. Just come to the Sundial Garden at 11 am. No need to book. All walks are free. An expert will be on hand.*

- Sunday 11th May: Invertebrates
- Saturday 5th July: flowering plants and trees
- Saturday 9th August: Pond dipping

Photographs by  
Anne Rushbrook



Glory-of-the-snow  
(*Chionodoxa*)

## NATURE NOTES - CATHY BELL

Last spring the weather was cold and wet, followed by a warm and dry summer and autumn; now we have had one of the mildest winters for ages and we are enjoying a very early spring. The bulbs have been lovely this year, starting with snowdrops and crocuses, followed by snowflakes (at the back of the pond), and a splendid display of daffodils. Celendines and dandelions thrive in many unweeded areas, providing welcome splashes of yellow. The marsh marigolds are out on the pond edge and if you look carefully you will find the wee red flowers of the Bog Myrtle and 'pussies' on the willow.

The moorhens, coots and mallards are nesting and crows and magpies are seen flying overhead with twigs for their nests. The swans are attempting to nest - rather later than usual, despite the early spring, so we watch with anticipation what happens next. Wood peckers (greater spotted) have been heard drumming and calling on the east side of the park (nesting in the Botanics) . Lots of little birds are nesting in the allotments, sundial garden and hedges etc (thrushes). Buzzards and a sparrowhawk have also been seen.

Cathy spotted two young scientists at the pond catching and checking on the health and productivity of the wee stickleback fish. They were pronounced to be fit and producing lots of eggs, before being returned to the water. Gooseander and tufted ducks have been around all winter and the heron is a regular. Maria spotted some mating frogs (hopefully not a two-for-one for the heron). Anybody seen any frog spawn - (duck caviar)? The lesser black backed gulls are around (yellow beak and legs) on the pond and in the field next door and also oystercatchers with their haunting calls.



Snowflakes at back  
of pond



Goosanders, tufted ducks,  
mallard and coots



Marsh Marigold

## DRAINAGE - PAM BARNES

The drainage problems seem to be solved at last. The area near the tennis courts where we had a 'second pond' for about a year has been extensively drained and is looking good. A few holes have appeared where dogs have enthusiastically dug into the sandy free draining soil but these will be filled in and seeded. Other areas of the park have also been dealt with and we hope to be completely on top of the problem by next year.

## **THE CONVENER'S REPORT - PAM BARNES**

### **The Sundial Garden**

A lot of new perennials which were put into the north bed last spring have had to cope with difficult weather conditions in their first year - especially lack of water. However, although the area is looking untidy at the moment, many plants are coming through well but we do need some volunteers to keep them weed-free. Please ring Pam (0131 332 4765) if you can spare a few hours to weed.

Jennifer, the Park Ranger, has ordered some new roses to fill in the gaps in the rose beds. We have chosen a variety called floral carpet (sometimes called flower carpet ) which is very disease resistant – this is particularly important as most roses are prone to disease and require a lot of work spraying to keep them looking good. The plants will be in red, white and pink, and if they do well this year then next year we will replace some of the other roses that are not so healthy. We would like to thank Kathleen Allanach for making such a good job of weeding the rose beds.

Gaps in the perennial north bed will also be filled with new planting. Notices asking people to keep dogs on leads in the Sundial Garden will be put up while the planting gets established.

### **Events in the Park**

There has been much discussion between the Friends' Committee and council officials on the types of events that should be encouraged or discouraged in the park. The general opinion is that smaller events which locals can attend and that do not take up too much of the park for long periods, are best. Larger gatherings, eg Moonwalk, can take over almost a quarter of the park space for several weeks, and often need high perimeter fencing. The machinery used to erect fences and tents compacts the ground, and can damage the drainage. We have asked that these large events be shared with other areas in Edinburgh and only held in Inverleith Park once every four years. The Foodies Festival was very popular last year and attended by many locals, despite an entrance fee. We would like it to come again this summer as long as some of the organisational problems are resolved. The New Year and Festival fireworks displays are watched from Inverleith Park and are greatly enjoyed by those who come.

### **Scottish Government Private Members' Bill to build Portobello High School on Portobello Park which is inalienable Common Good land**

This Bill is still going through parliament and as you know we objected to it on the grounds that this would allow Edinburgh Council to take Portobello Park and build a school on it (when the highest Court in the land had said such action was illegal) setting a precedent for councils all over Scotland to use inalienable Common Good land such as parks for purposes other than those for which they were intended.

You will remember how hard we had to fight to save part of Inverleith Park from being sold for luxury housing, and we therefore look upon this Bill with foreboding. Portobello certainly needs a new school but this solution makes it possible for any council to reallocate their inalienable land. We were very surprised that the MSPs looking at the Bill threw out our evidence - along with that of 6 other objectors from other parts of Scotland with similar arguments. They would not allow any of us to present a case even though legal experts on both sides (i.e. acting both for the council and for the original objectors) had made the point that this Bill would affect the use of Common Good land elsewhere in Scotland, as councils could use the same mechanism.

## **THE RETURN OF THE IRON CUP - JOAN BEATTIE**

The Dunlop Drinking Fountain lies at the intersection of the two main paths in Inverleith Park. The fountain, dated 1899, is set in a rough red granite obelisk and was erected in memory of John Charles Dunlop, a councillor for St Bernard's Ward and a great enthusiast of the park.



An iron drinking cup attached to a strong chain used to hang from the fountain, but due to an outbreak of typhoid in Aberdeen in 1964, it was removed. In fact drinking cups throughout the city were removed.

Arthur is a member of Friends of Inverleith Park and has now sent the cup back down to Inverleith - returned after a long break. Unfortunately we cannot re-instate it into the fountain (as shown above) but will keep it safe, hopefully for the next 50 years.

## **ARTHUR'S MEMORIES - ARTHUR DUTCH**

My earliest memories are being allocated an allotment where the large miniature golf course is now (even the golf course now no longer exists) and helping my father to lift the turf and start turning the soil. At that time there was a large circular area on the hill at the north side of the pond enclosed by railings and planted with shrubs and bushes. Entry to this area was by a tunnel from the pond, giving the water fowl a safe nesting area. I always thought it was a great mistake that this was removed. I can also remember when you came down Portgower Place and turned left to go to the pond, there was a little cottage which the yacht club used. Behind this was a triangle of enclosed ground where the swans and Canadian Geese were locked up at dusk. I also remember one winter rolling a huge snowball down the hill on to the frozen pond, much to the great annoyance of the skaters. They did not enjoy my sense of fun.

During the war there was entertainment at the band stand which was located through the Rose Garden, then turn to the left there were two building for changing rooms and in the centre was a beautiful building with band area and public toilets at the back. This building should never have been demolished, the woodwork was of real quality. I have given the iron cup that belonged to the pink granite fountain and which the workman gave to me so many years ago and decided that the correct home for it is with the Friends. Aye Arthur Dutch.