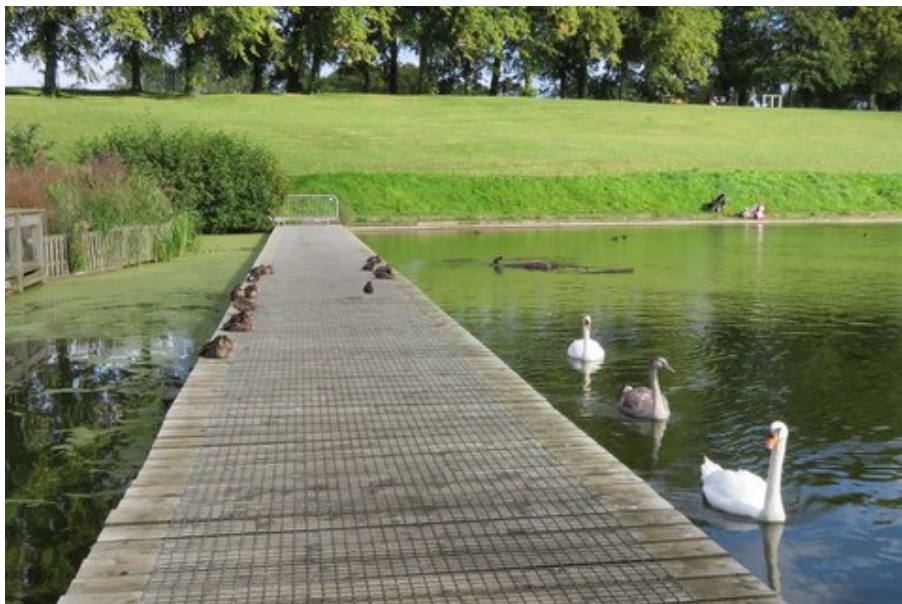


Friends of Inverleith Park

OUR update on YOUR Park - Issue 34 Autumn 2020



This year's AGM is planned for Monday 23rd November. If it is not possible to have face to face meetings at that time, we may be able to arrange a virtual meeting. All members will be notified by email nearer the time.

**Don't forget to buy your copy (or many copies) of the
2021 INVERLEITH PARK CALENDAR**

With stunning photographs by Anne Rushbrook and others

Copies cost £5 (still the same price) and are available from
Borthwick's, Write Stuff, from Pam at 332 4765, Maria at 332 6567,
Tony at 332 4759, Anne at 332 7090, Joan at 556 7993, Cathy at 332 8707

Report from our Convener - Pam Barnes

This has been a very strange year for everyone. In March the country went into lockdown because of the coronavirus outbreak. Originally it was intended to last 3 weeks but ended up 3 months - it was then temporarily relaxed before being tightened again. The first lockdown coincided with 3 months of beautiful sunny and very dry weather. People were allowed out to exercise and asked to keep a social distance of 2m.

The effect on the park was that it has never been so well used. As many people were furloughed from work and the schools were closed, the parks became very important to people's health and welfare. Now that further restrictions have followed, and there is a ban on social interaction between households indoors, the Park, where up to six people from two households can meet, is more important than ever. On the whole people behave reasonably and do try to keep their distance - not always easy.

Thanks to the Park Rangers, Jen and Fiona , and to Gary Hook and his depleted team at the depot who have all the parks in a large area of the NW Edinburgh to look after. They have done their best to deal with the essentials, but the situation has really affected the usual park activities:

Gardening in the Sundial Garden

In the early months of the summer the Sundial Garden suffered both from the absence of the usual volunteers and the absence of rain. We were seriously worried that the plants would die as many were not long planted. Carrying watering cans from the pond as part of daily exercise saved some of them. As the lockdown eased the volunteers were able to come back gradually. Working in the open air at 2m was not thought to be a problem by the authorities. I would like to thank the volunteers for their gallant efforts.

Many members of the public have told us how important the Sundial Garden is to them and how much they appreciated what we were doing. The virus has made it very clear that there is a desperate need for public toilets. The Botanic Garden has been closed throughout and so their toilets were not available and people were forced to take their children behind the bushes in the Sundial Garden. This is not hygienic and the council needs to address this matter urgently.

We have really missed Graeme and his Community Payback people who used to come and help with heavier work when we needed it. Community Payback is a scheme whereby individuals who have broken the law are given community service. Thank goodness they may be coming back in a limited way soon - we will be delighted to see them when the restrictions allow. The volunteers meet every Wednesday morning at 10am weather permitting. Come and join us - no gardening knowledge necessary.

Young people in the park

The intermittent problems with large gatherings of young people in Inverleith Park was much reduced during lock-down. There is still sometimes a lot of litter left around benches but the glass breaking and petty vandalism had mainly stopped. However there has been a bit more in the summer as lock-down eased. The police still patrol the park and we would like to thank them for the way they dealt with this problem. They have a good relationship with most of the youngsters but deal firmly with any that are behaving badly.

Continuing bin problems:

The problems with overflowing bins have become worse because of the huge increase in numbers using the park. The cleansing team that comes every day to the park has been heroic - clearing up early every day the huge amounts of litter people are leaving by overflowing bins. Why don't people take it home?

Future plans for the park

The lockdown has made it difficult to get on with any future plans for the park but we hope to discuss matters with the Council and see what possibilities there are. If anyone has any ideas for the future or experience of community involvement in parks - please contact us. The need for a netball court has been suggested and these are the sort of ideas we want to know about.

Cafe

It's good to see the mobile cafe is up and running again after being shut down - it is very popular.

Games and sport and outdoor equipment

The run-in-the-park, and games and sport in general, have been suspended during lockdown but are gradually starting up again. Exercise classes, which were 'Zoomed' through the initial lockdown, are now in the Park again, with up to 30 people per class engaging in socially distanced activities. It is also nice to see petanque starting up again on Sunday morning and people playing tennis - it feels more like normal life!

One of the outdoor fitness pieces of equipment by the play area has broken and had to be removed for safety. It's disappointing that it only lasted 4 years but it was very popular and heavily used so we have agreed to replace it. Some parts of the fitness trail have also been removed because of gradual deterioration. Unfortunately the park has no budget for anything other than emergencies at the moment. Maybe next spring...?

Allotments

At the beginning of September, at the peak of harvest-time, the allotments suffered a series of break-ins. At least two sheds were opened and the contents strewn about. It could be that the intruders intended to use them for shelter, though squash fruit was vandalised with what look like knife marks and then broken. A ladder, possibly stolen from someone's garden was used to gain entry into the site.

Recent vandalism in the Sundial Garden

At about the same time as the allotments suffered break-ins, the sundial garden was vandalised. On the morning of the 2nd September, when the gardening volunteers arrived for their usual Wednesday session, they found that some of our compost bins had

been stolen. The wooden slats of the large bins were dismantled and removed. Also stolen were the bamboo hoops used for protecting plants and some plants in pots ready to plant out this autumn. All very depressing.

However some time later we discovered the slats hidden in some very obscure undergrowth - together with a chair stolen from the allotments. The park rangers have retrieved and secured them for us - so we have cheered up.

A rare plant in the Sundial Garden

Growing among the nettles, which it resembles, is an unusual plant, called Upright Pallitory, *Parietaria officinalis*. The plant, the identity of which has been confirmed by an expert from the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland, has caused some excitement in botanical circles. It is the second record for Scotland, the other one being far away in Sutherland. Unfortunately the recent break-in has damaged the population and only a few remain. We have warned the gardening team to look after the surviving plants.

Nature Notes from Cathy Bell

After such a sunny dry summer, then some rain and now some warm sun – we are having a really beautiful autumn with masses of wild and orchard fruits and wonderfully coloured leaves. The allotments have produced many lovely colours too with pumpkins, apples, plums plus dahlias and cosmos etc.

The one surviving cygnet on the pond is growing and developing very well – now in its ‘ugly duckling’ stage with mixed feathers. The two families of coots are doing very well. How is it that their young manage to evade the hungry heron?

The sparrowhawk and kestrel are seen quite often over the allotments and the tawny owl calls sometimes from the surrounding trees of an evening. Also buzzards pass overhead. Birds seem to have bred well in the allotment and park generally. Rabbit numbers are now very well down but there are quite a lot of voles and mice. No doubt the fox and her family having been helping to keep down the vermin.

So now we must watch and wait and see if the old adage comes true - ‘If there is a lot of fruit in the autumn will we have a harsh winter’. Please remember to email the website if you see or find something special or unusual or take a good photo.

To join the Friends: <http://www.friendsofinverleithpark.co.uk/membership.html>

Facebook: Find us on our Facebook page with lots of beautiful photos by Anne Rushbrook - a good place to leave comments and communicate with us.

www.facebook.com/Save-Inverleith-Park-18092658601438/ .

Online: www.friendsofinverleithpark.co.uk