

# The Valley Voice

Issue 45

Jan 2023



Friends of  
**Braidburn  
Valley Park**

For further information about the Friends and our wonderful Park, visit our website:  
[www.braidburnvalleypark.org.uk](http://www.braidburnvalleypark.org.uk)

*In this edition:*

**Tea in the Park**

**Origins**

**Grade A**

**Bins**

**Membership & AGM**

## **Tea in the Park: Dog Show!**

We were delighted to host our first public event in the park since Covid in September with the return of Tea in the Park. The dog show was certainly a highlight and much fun was had by all.

Wonderful to see the park full of kids, dogs, adults and even rubber ducks!



## **Contact Us**



Join us on Facebook! To post or message us, search for Braidburn Valley Park's Friends

Email: [info@braidburnvalleypark.org.uk](mailto:info@braidburnvalleypark.org.uk)

Website: [www.braidburnvalleypark.org.uk](http://www.braidburnvalleypark.org.uk)

## THE ORIGINS OF THE FRIENDS OF BRAIDBURN VALLEY PARK

Whilst 2022 marked the twentieth anniversary of the setting up of The Friends Group, the story goes back to the mid-1990s. The Head of Parks of the Edinburgh Council, Jim Mackay and his henchman, John Munro, were very keen to involve the local councillors with developments of the parks under their jurisdiction. My late wife, former Councillor Daphne Sleight who represented Fairmilehead Ward, named them "The Jim and John show". These two were passionate about their brief and they knew that, among all the parks in the Fairmilehead and Morningside areas, Braidburn Valley Park was the jewel in the crown.

Ian Nimmo in his 1995 book "Edinburgh's Green Heritage" pays great attention to the variety of trees in the park, mentioning "Groves of cherry trees, a stately fringe of Wheatley Elms along Comiston Road, a miniature woodland of elm, beech, sycamore, holly and shrubbery at the main gate lend the park interest and depth". It was in this context that Jim and John were inspired to use Millennium Funding to purchase indigenous trees to form, as they called it, "an arboretum" to flow along the park to link with the trees at The Hermitage. As local councillor, I wrote lyrically in a newsletter to residents how the park, which up till that time had simply been maintained – with the odd remedial works to bridges and pathways – would have money spent and enhancement made.

Unfortunately, this was misinterpreted by residents (mainly in Greenbank) who thought that the wide grassed areas were to become woodland. Undaunted, I put together an "ad hoc" working party of residents so that, not only the concept could be explained in more detail but also that other ideas about improvements could be fed back to the Council. Jim Mackay drew me aside after a meeting and said, "Councillor, if we can get a properly constituted Friends Group formed, we can get a lot of grant money and really get things moving". The seed was sown. Between then and 2001, the group monitored the tree planting but out of it grew ideas for the betterment of the park. Paths were re-aligned to make them more user friendly and the main path was resurfaced and, eventually, tarred.

In 2001 I chaired a meeting in The Hermitage House, with Jim Mackay, the MSP and several members of the working group. It was agreed that a formal Friends Group be formed. The Inaugural Meeting took place in January 2002 and a Committee chaired by Jim Lavin was elected. It was decided to mark that year's anniversary of the planting of the Trefoil (the cherry trees planted by the Girl Guides to mark King George V's Silver Jubilee in 1935) and to invite as many of the original guides as possible. This was carried out with the planting of bulbs under the new trees and on the Comiston Road embankment. Local children, parents and friends did the planting and they were encouraged to become founder members of the group to be known as "The Friends of Braidburn Valley Park".

I carried on my involvement for several years, succeeding Jim as Chair in 2003. The Chair then passed to Andrew Swann, followed by Karen Young; their abounding energy resulted in many improvements. After standing down as Chair, I did a stint as treasurer, then membership secretary to keep the momentum going. I was really delighted when we received the first of many "Green Flag Awards" and honoured to go to Leeds to collect it on behalf of the Group.

I am delighted that the kernel planted in the late 1990s has produced a flourishing group who are continuing the good works. Long may it continue.

Lindsay Walls  
December 2022

## Grade 'A' Park!

Former councillor Lindsay Walls regards setting up the Friends group in 2002 as his finest achievement in 22 years on the council.

Each year the council grades its 141 parks, based on about 25 criteria. This year for the first time we have been awarded an A grade! We are the 5th best park in the whole of Edinburgh. None of this could be achieved without the help of our Friends group, committee members and volunteers, together with our Parks officers, Mike Shields and Peter Davidson. If you are interested, you can read the 70 page report by typing in the following:

<https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/file/32202/parks-quality-report-2022>

Finally the summary of the assessor's visit:-

*"A very clean park that was very well used on the day of my visit. Lots of interesting interpretation and vast areas to enjoy including interesting walks, the use of the gym and really well-situated seats to relax in and take in the park."*

## Our bridges now have names!

We decided some time ago that the bridges in the park should have names, but what? We wanted a theme: eventually the names of the trees nearest to each were chosen.

From the Main Gate, the first is Rowan Tree Bridge, for the groups of rowans to the right, the second is Hornbeam, the trees that form the 'wings' of the theatre. Willow Tree Bridge was the obvious one for the wooden bridge, and the fourth is nearest to the cherry tree trefoil. So now if you want to meet someone in the park, you can name a bridge as the place!



A long-term resident told us that the stone bridge under Comiston Road had always been known as the Horseshoe Bridge because of its shape, so it too has a sign now.



## *Bins in the park*

You will all be aware that the bins have frequently been overflowing and we often email the council - with a successful outcome; some of you very sensibly asked why we can't have segregated bins for recycling and bottles.

Therefore your committee has been asking questions; the good news is that the council have agreed to replace the bins with six double size ones. Logically they won't need emptying as often.

The less good news is that we put in a deputation that it would help eco-wise if larger parks had segregated bins; it was ignored. So we wrote to the Executive Director of Place who replied that trials in other parks in 2019 had resulted in too much contamination and had been discontinued.

Then in November a councillor, Jack Caldwell, raised the same question, stating that the trial has resulted in around 300,000 bottles and 130,000 cans being saved from landfill. He says that senior officers are very positive about the idea and that an update will go to the Transport & Environment committee in March 2023. You could make a difference by emailing our four local councillors supporting the idea.



*A very soggy day in the park recently...*

## *Membership matters and AGM*

Our AGM will be held on Sunday Feb 26th in Greenbank Church at 2pm. Be sure to get there in time for tea and biscuits at 1.45pm!

Thanks to the members (the great majority) who have renewed their subscription. If you haven't, please do not delay! For motivation, see where your money goes here:

[www.braidburnvalleypark.org.uk/what-your-friends-do/](http://www.braidburnvalleypark.org.uk/what-your-friends-do/)

If you are in the habit of paying by cash or cheque, please consider setting up a standing order for future payments. It makes administration painless; and will mean there is one less thing for you to remember! You will find a mandate to send to your bank on our website. It contains the FOBVP account details which you'll need if you prefer to set up the payment though online banking.