



The VALLEY VOICE

Newsletter of the Friends of Braidburn Valley Park

A message from the Chairman of the Friends of the Braidburn Valley Park:

Let me open my first letter to you by thanking Jim Lavin, my predecessor as Chairman, for all his stalwart work over the past years. Jim was one of the founding members of the working party set up by Jim McKay and me to ensure that any planned improvements to the Braidburn Valley Park were in tune with the wishes of the local community.

Jim's enthusiasm was infectious and I was delighted when he agreed to become the Acting Chairman of the Friends until the first Annual General Meeting in January. It was due to that enthusiasm that the October bulb planting was so successful, that a committee of members with diverse skills was formed, and that we have a thriving membership.

I am honoured that your Committee elected me as Chairman for this year. The Braidburn Valley Park means a great deal to me and I want to ensure that it becomes Edinburgh's premier park – although it is not far off that already. With several committee meetings under my belt, I know that the dedication of the present committee will make that wish a reality.

At our May meeting we had a 'brainstorming' session which ended with a wishlist of possible improvements, some of which

(continued overleaf)



Two little girls enjoy the beautiful daffodils, planted by the Friends last autumn.

STORYTELLING IN THE PARK

**Saturday 6 September 2003
10am-3pm
at The Stage (centre of the park)**

**storytelling for young children
(under 5s and over 5s sessions)**

**£3.50 per ticket
(limited numbers)
available in advance from
Karen Young 0131-446 9795
Rona Ferguson 0131-447 6825**

refreshments available

Chairman's letter (continued)

could be carried out by the Council's Culture and Leisure Department, and some of which could be achieved by the Friends. These are listed on page 3 of this newsletter, and we have included a special form for your feedback and for your ideas for other initiatives or improvements. We would be delighted to hear your views.

A sub-committee has worked to produce two Interpretation Panels which we propose to site at locations where there are panoramic views. These will enhance people's appreciation and knowledge of the Park, and an application for a community grant to finance them will be submitted to the Pentlands Local Development Committee.

The clean-ups of the Burn in March and June were resounding successes. Very many thanks to all those who turned out, especially committee members. The good weather made the task easier and we will let you know the dates of future clean-ups.

Once again, many thanks for your support to me and the committee.

Lindsay Walls
Chairman

NEW MEMBERS

We always welcome new members. If you have any friends or neighbours who wish to become Friends of the Braidburn Valley Park, please e-mail: braidburnfriends@hotmail.com or come along to the Storytelling Tent in the Park on Saturday 6 September to join up. Benefits include this newsletter, a chance to take part in Burn clean-ups and planting sessions, and an opportunity to have your say in the future of your local park.



The Friends have achieved two clear-ups of the Braid Burn. On the first occasion a whole skip was filled but, as a result, the second clean-up was less arduous. Good weather made it great fun.



CONSULTATION ON PARK IMPROVEMENTS

At the Friends Annual General Meeting in January, the Committee discussed several proposals for enhancing the Park. The Committee was asked to go away and formulate a list of proposals which could be put to Friends for their views. These have taken some time to refine.

The proposals are as follows, and the separate Feedback Form which comes with this Newsletter invites your views. Please complete the Form and return it to the Secretary of the Friends, Rona Ferguson, at 21 Greenbank Crescent. Alternatively, you can e-mail braidburnfriends@hotmail.com.

Regular activity

The Committee, in consultation with the Council's Parks Managers, proposes organising regular clean-ups of the Burn, and further events for the planting of bulbs and wildflowers. All members will be notified and invited to take part.

In addition, the Committee will continue to liaise with the Council on ongoing issues of maintenance, positioning of seating, siting of four additional litter bins, signage, etc.

Signage

As indicated in the Chairman's Letter (page 2), attractive Interpretation Panels are being designed. These will include information on geological and wildlife features of the Park and are sure to be of interest to adults and children alike.

The issue of signs at the entrances to the Park is being re-visited.

Trees

Some of the Wheatley Elms flanking Pentland Terrace/ Comiston Road are being removed because of disease. The Committee has asked that they be replaced with trees which are similarly imposing.

Theatre area

This was thoroughly discussed at the AGM. The Council wishes to thin out the trees surrounding the stage, but this flat area will be retained. It is proposed that the upper tiers of the terraced 'seating' area will be leveled, leaving the lower terraces intact, and that the shrubbery outlining its 'crown' shape will be enhanced.

Area at southern end of the Park

Scottish Water has been asked to re-instate the area at the south gate of the Park following their work on the holding tanks.

Play Area

The Committee considered a request to install play facilities for children and young people. Suggestions ranged from an adventure playground for older children, through to a kickabout area on the flat ground at the corner of Pentland Terrace and Comiston Springs Avenue. The Council has no plans to install these facilities because of safety and other considerations, but the Committee will continue to consider suggestions for improvements to children's experience of the Park.

Cycle Track

The path through the Park is often used by cyclists, even though this contravenes the existing by-laws. The Council wishes to promote safer routes for cyclists. What are Friends' views on cycling in the Park?

Toilet block

Should the toilet block, locked for several years because of vandalism, be re-opened as a toilet block? Should it, if funds became available, be refurbished for another purpose eg weekend tearoom staffed by volunteers?

Feedback

We'd love to hear your views on the pros and cons of all these ideas. Please use the enclosed Feedback Form and return it to the Secretary at the address above or e-mail us.

YOUR COMMITTEE

Following the Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Braidburn Valley Park in January, the Committee is as follows:

- Chairman: Lindsay Walls
- Secretary: Rona Ferguson
21 Greenbank Crescent
Edinburgh EH10 5TE
e-mail: braidburnfriends@hotmail.com
- Treasurer: Kim Prichard
- Committee: Claire Dorren
Christine Johnston
Moirra Land
Athol Pirie
Morag Pirie
Pauline Ramsay
Karen Young

All the Committee members live close to the Park and represent the community which uses the Park. The Chairman and Committee hold regular meetings and welcome the views of the Friends and of the wider community.

If you would like to raise an issue or concern with the Committee, please contact the Secretary in the first instance.

TREE WARDEN SCHEME

The City of Edinburgh Council, which manages the Braidburn Valley Park and most other parks in the city, is running a Tree Warden scheme. They are offering to train volunteers who might be interested in learning more about the city's trees. The course involves a series of training days and includes sessions on how to identify different trees, how to spot diseased trees, and an insight into tree management. For further information, please contact the Council via:
karen.hay@edinburgh.gov.uk

DID YOU KNOW?

The open-air theatre in the Braidburn Valley Park was used, post-World War II, with great success by a variety of drama and light opera groups.

The opening production of the Shakespeare Festival in June 1945 was *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, followed by *As You Like It*, which attracted 10,000 people in the first three days, and *The Merchant of Venice*. *The Scotsman* commented favourably on the performances, but regretted the distortion of the sound created by sudden gusts of wind.

The following year saw productions of *Rob Roy*, and *A Country Girl*. The Southern Light Opera Company performed *Merrie England*, for which the Parks Department obligingly dammed the Braid Burn in order to provide water sufficiently deep for Queen Elizabeth to make a triumphal entry by royal barge.

More recently, the Park has played host to sheepdog trials, dog shows, Festival performances and community events. The Storytelling Event on 6 September, organized by the Friends of the Braidburn Valley Park, continues this proud tradition.

For further information on the history of the Park and the surrounding Greenbank area, read Malcolm Cant's excellent book *The History of Greenbank in Edinburgh*, from which much of the above information is taken.

PLEASE KEEP OUR PARK BEAUTIFUL

Four additional litter bins will soon be installed by the Council. Please use them to keep the Park beautiful. In particular, please do not allow your dog to foul the park. Thank you.