

Friends of Starbank Park

Committee Meeting

7.30 pm, Monday, 1st August, Starbank Inn

Minutes

Present: Alastair Robertson (Chair)
Janet McArthur (Secretary)
Graham Buckley (Treasurer)
Anna Dobie
Stan Dunlop
Rhona Else
Vikki Floyd
Sandy Logan
Christine Shepherd

1. There were no apologies.
 2. *The Park: where we are now.* Alastair noted that the park was in good order and looked very good, an improvement on last year. It was agreed that much of this was due to the huge efforts from Stan and Jenny, on top of the normal volunteering. Alastair felt that we spend too much time weeding and we agreed that we should take steps to “design out” as much weeding out of park maintenance as we can. The various borders were discussed in turn with reducing weeding as one consideration.
 - i. East Herbaceous Border: This is looking pretty good now, it has been heavily weeded on several occasions this year and it has been mulched with leaf mould. There are quite large gaps between plants in some areas and, overall there remains room for improvement. The following principles were agreed:
 - Consult with Jen Johnstone/Ritchie Fraser over planning
 - 100% coverage
 - Quite large blocks of planting single species/variety
 - High at the back, lower at the front
 - Look for colour through the year, with bulbs in spring and autumn
 - Be willing to undertake the replanting of this border, one section at a time
 - To minimise costs and maximise stock, we agreed to consider:
 - ◇ Where possible, re-organise & re-use what is already in the park
 - ◇ ask the Council for plants
 - ◇ specifically ask members for donations of spare plants of a single species/variety, preferably in reasonable numbers
 - ◇ purchase small immature plants and bring them on ourselves
 - ◇ propagation from seed and cuttings
- Delphiniums and chrysanthemums were amongst the plants suggested. The wholesale Nursery at Denny may be a good place to buy plants once we are ready.
- Actions:
- Three or four “off the shelf” plans will be brought to the next meeting for discussion (**Janet, Graham, Stan, Anna**).
 - A rough list of the garden stock that could be used in the east herbaceous border will be prepared by **Alastair** and **Janet**.

- ii. East wall, behind the house: Stan & Jenny with help from Janet have made huge improvements here. Only ongoing weeding and tidying required at the moment.
- iii. Herb borders: new roses have replaced the dying rosemary so it's looking much better. No action except keeping tidy.
- iv. Nature Trail: Children's plaque ordered (now delivered), brackets purchased for bird boxes, 2X large insect hotels/planters themed by story are in preparation. Plan exists, plant list exists. Some plants ordered but more needed. Library and trail a huge success but still needs more work. Action: Plants to be ordered by **Alastair** and **Janet**. They will consider purchasing immature plants, seeds, bulbs etc as well as mature plants. Carved/cut out figures are necessary. **Alastair** to discuss with Tom and Rod Else. **Janet** and **Alastair** to look at alternatives. Alastair and Janet to ask Jen if the Council would make spare display board stands available to the Friends.
- v. West Border beside Andrew Morton of Planter: There are a lot of good plants in it but this border is not very exciting. **Graham** will draw up a plan for shrub planting.
- vi. Inner SE and SW corner borders: It was agreed that roses (red in one and orange in the other) should be planted in these borders, with catmint and alchemilla or similar around the edges of the border. **Alastair** and **Janet** will raise this with Jen and Ritchie.
- vii. Other two inner southernmost borders: No decisions were made with respect to these borders. They are presently mixed and quite respectable.
- viii. Inner Herbaceous Borders: These are a great success. The dense planting limits the need for weeding. There are some gaps and **Alastair** and **Janet** will approach Jen and Ritchie in the first place for filling these. Alternative approaches for replacing these (purchase or propagation) will be considered in the event of the Council not being in a position to fill the gaps (**all**).
- ix. There were no proposals for changes to the existing rose borders. It is hoped that roses benefit from regular care and mulch.
- x. Small central border: This is a bit sad and needs revamped. It should get a bit more oomph. A sundial will help. **Alastair** and **Janet** will speak to Ritchie and Jen about the sundial.
- xi. Summer bedding borders: These look good already and the tight planting hides the weeds. No action apart from regular weeding and edging.
- xii. Pergolas: There were pergolas with climbing roses near the centre of the park in the 1950s and 60s (maybe before). **Alastair** and **Janet** will discuss the possibility of reinstating pergolas with Ritchie and Jen.
- xiii. Star and Crescents: Most thought that the close planting of the star and crescents had been a success. The 125 was not as clear as hoped, however. It was suggested that it should be removed and replaced with gravel but the feeling of the meeting was that we should retain the planting, tidying and weeding as necessary.
- xiv. Fountain: We agreed that it was broadly a success. New shells are needed and, in the longer term, a sculpture should be considered. **Alastair** and **Janet** will ask Ritchie and Jen about getting another load of shells. Alternative sources will be considered if necessary.
- xv. North wall border: Sandy was suggested that sea grasses would be an improvement on the current perennial geraniums and daffodils. **Sandy** will suggest possible grasses to use. Alastair expressed strong opposition to this idea as this border is a success and considers that it would be a retrograde step. The daffodils in the spring and blue geraniums in the summer peep over the wall at the front. The tight planting of the geraniums minimises the need for maintenance. There are gaps,

mainly at the Starbank Inn end and **Stan** will split some of the plants and fill these gaps.

- xvi. New borders on the slopes. Plants are growing well but so are the weeds, particularly at the east wall. The perennial geraniums are planted only every 3 feet in these borders. Extra geranium plants will become available when the roses are planted (see above) and these could be used there.

The leaf mould mulch will soon be finished. **Alastair** and **Janet** will ask Ritchie and Jen for a load of wood chippings.

3. *Events:*

- i. The Starbank Gala was a big success, well attended on a glorious day. It was also financially rewarding.
- ii. The next event will be a members' wine and cheese party from 6-8pm on Saturday 3 September. Arrangements will be made by e-mail. **Alastair** will seek permission from the Council.
- iii. The Halloween Party will be repeated on Saturday 29 October. **Alastair** will seek approval from the Council.
- iv. **Janet** will arrange a wreath making Saturday on 10th December. If there is demand, there will be two sessions. The cost will be £20 per head with a request for a £5 donation to the Friends.
- v. We will aim to hold a Christmas Carol Concert on Saturday 17 December. Janet will check whether Newhaven Choir will be available and, if so, whether it would be OK for us to invite the Edinburgh Brass Band. If so, **Alastair** will write to Pete Ottery.
- vi. Easter is late in 2017, the Easter Egg Hunt is likely to be arranged for 14 April, assuming schools are on holiday.

4. *Viewpoint:* No progress. Action remains on **Alastair**.

5. *Toilets:* The portable toilets cost £264 for the gala and could not be insured. It might be an option to restore the toilets and only use them for events. A commercial cleaner would be used to clean them for events. Stan opened the ladies toilets up and these looked in reasonably sound condition. They desperately need redecoration. A new door with secure lock would be needed and plumbing and wiring would need checking. However, it looks possible that they could be restored reasonably easily. **Alastair** and **Janet** will discuss with Ritchie and Jen.

6. *Minutes and Actions.* All significant actions had been undertaken and the minutes were approved.

7. *Treasurer's report:* There are over 150 members. Only around 30 have yet not paid in 2016. The bank Balance is £2600. Considerable expenditure on plants and associated materials is expected.

8. *AOB:*

- i. The Park retained its Green Flag in 2016
- ii. The Friends scored 94% in the "It's Your Neighbourhood" assessment.
- iii. Alastair noted that he will stand down as chair at the next AGM, which will be in early December. He will continue to participate in the gardening. The committee congratulated Alastair Robertson on his commitment and drive that he has brought to forming and developing the Friends of Starbank Park group. (*Janet asked me to add the last sentence.*)

9. *Next Meeting:* Tuesday 6 September, 7.30, Starbank Inn.

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3/08/2016