

Friends of Corstorphine Hill

NEWSLETTER No. 36

October 2009 Editor: Les Hutcheon Tel 334 3832

Ten Years and Celebrating

On the 8th of August this year we were very lucky to have picked one of the few perfectly sunny days this summer to celebrate our open day in the walled garden and on the hill. I think some one up above very kindly answered our prayers. Led by our piper, Councillor Paul Edie our President proudly unveiled the green pennant and started the festivities. The walled garden is the first and only garden to have the green pennant which is a national award that recognises high quality green spaces managed by voluntary and community groups.

Our entertainment for the day was the fabulous Forth Valley Ladies Chorus who were brilliant and judging by the audience they were much appreciated. The ponies had a busy time taking the the children for short rides and judging by the smiles on the children's faces they had a great time. Other young children stood patiently in a line to have their faces painted by Caroline and Jennifer, little girls waiting to be turned into fairies and butterflies and the boys to spider man or have the Scottish saltire painted on their faces, they all looked lovely. The bus to the tower was well used and Jim and Jamie transported many people up the hill where directed by Martin and his crew they saw the beautiful views of Edinburgh and the horizons. All the gazebos were kept busy. The Friends of Corstorphine Hill's table was manned by Fred and Irene who sold our books and gave out brochures and encouraged new members to join us. Two of our committee members Les and Brian gave information on problems of plants and trees on the hill and garden. The rangers service was represented by our friend David Kyles and the Corstorphine Historical Trust also told us about their services. The tombola ably manned by Margaret and Mairi had many happy people winning some nice prizes, and there were not many people who did not sample an ice cream from Mr & Mrs "LUCAS" alias Pete and Sally. Cool bottles of water, orange juice and/or a glass of wine were also much appreciated on such a nice warm day and Jennifer, Anne and William made excellent bar staff. It was lovely to see people relaxing in the walled garden listening to the chorus or the background skirl of the pipes, a good day enjoyed by all captured on video by our photographer Eddie MacLennan for posterity.

The following evening we held a dinner in The Best Western Capitol Hotel which with the excellent help from the hotel staff and the entertainers, was enjoyed by all. A very successful raffle was run by Gordon from which we donated £320.00 to the Carricknowe Dementia Jubilee Club.

Over all the weekend went well so much so that we received many letters of thanks for the celebrations, I would like to share one of them with you.

I am writing to thank you all for a wonderful week-end, even the weather was kind on Saturday. Ten years and you have achieved so much with all your hard work and enthusiasm. We are all so lucky having the hill on our door step and becoming a friend gives us a sense of belonging to and being part of something really special, you should all be so proud, not for all the accolades you have received but the legacy you will leave to the residents of Corstorphine to enjoy the hill and the peace and tranquility of the walled garden just as so many do just now."

As you all know The Friends group is very much a community group and will continue to bring all our members together as often as possible and although the hill has improved over the years we still have a long way to go and look forward to your continued dialogue in the future.

Eddie Price

Margaret Swann composed this ditty for the celebrations but the main pleasure was hearing her sing it herself to the tune of "Don't go down in the woods today"

Ode to the Friends of Corstorphine Hill

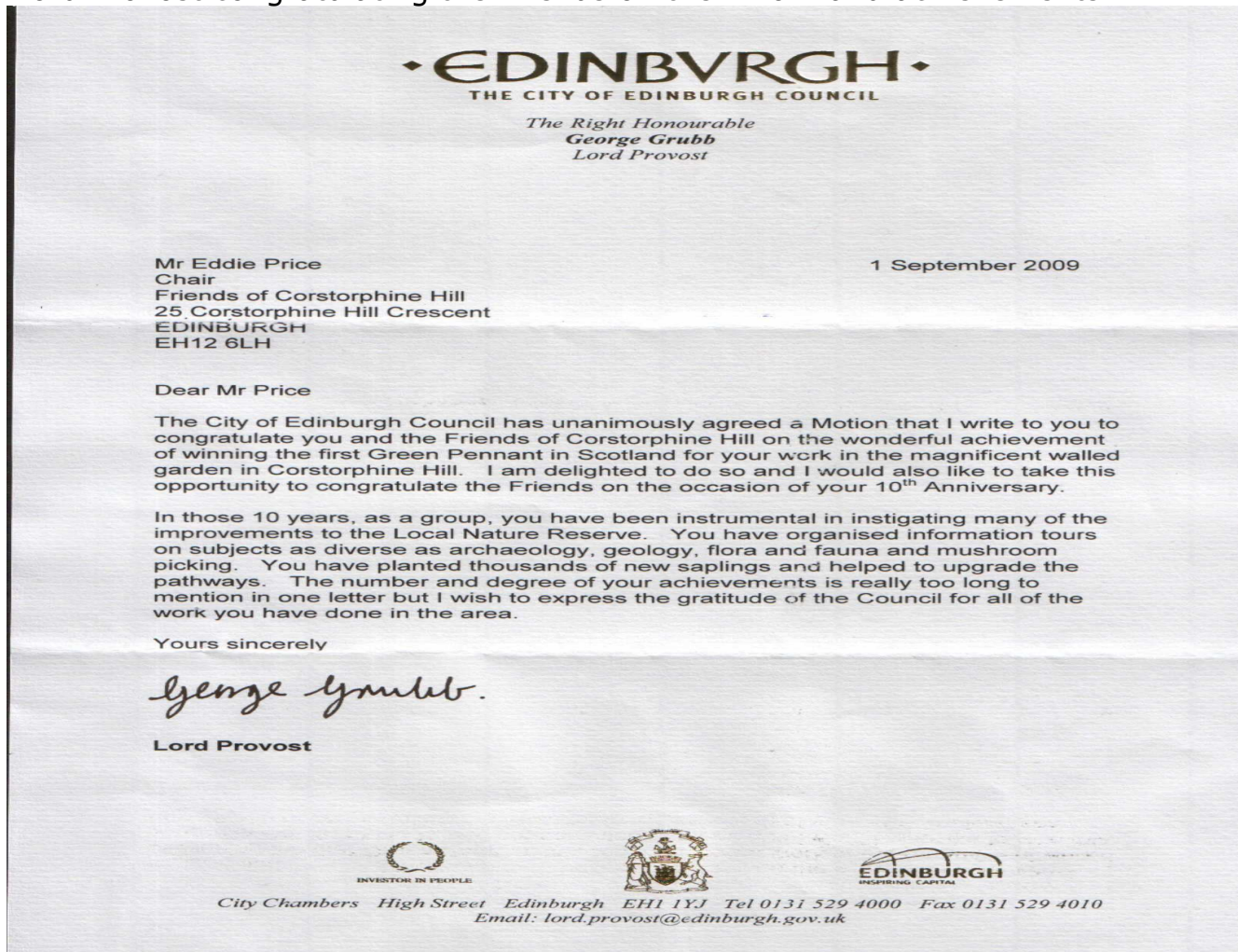
*If you go up to Corstorphine Hill, you're sure of a big surprise!
If you go up to Corstorphine Hill, you'll never believe your eyes!
Behind the wall, just through the gates, a tranquil haven for you awaits
So take a stroll and find the lovely Walled Garden.*

*If you go into the woods at night, you might get a nice surprise!
If you're very quiet in the woods at night, you might not believe your eyes!
Just off the path along the way, you might see badger cubs at play-
Another joys just up the Hill in Corstorphine.*

*Ten long years the Friends have come
And they have dug & pruned & weeded, and they've planted trees,
Ten long years they've giv'n their time
With sometimes aching backs and muddy knees!
Now the Garden's looking great
Grown ups and children come, relax and have lots of fun.
Theres even folk who come for their weddings and take photographs,
Because the Garden's for everyone.*

*Birds and bumblebees, butterflies and lots of rare flowers too!
Wolves and lions? You hear them call - but that's cos you're near the Zoo!
Climb up the Tower and look all around and you will be so glad that you've found
The joys of being one of the Friends of Corstorphine!
So here's to the future, a fruitful time, to walk, relax, to potter and climb,
So thanks for taking care of the Hill in Corstorphine!*

We welcome the opportunity to let our members see a copy of a letter from the Lord Provost congratulating the Friends on their work and achievements.



On the Situation Regarding the Zoo and Local Plan

May I remind you about the whole story of the Zoo's proposals for building 100 plus houses on a strip of their ground parallel to Kaimes Road. After first accepting this plan, the Council responded to the strong local feeling against a housing estate on the Zoo's land and deleted it from the Local Plan. The Zoo naturally objected. The issue went to a day's Hearing by the two Reporters appointed to report on the controversial points in the Local Plan. The Friends of Corstorphine Hill co-ordinated a combined response by the local organisations – Corstorphine and Murrayfield Community Councils, the Corstorphine Trust, the Friends and the Kaimes Road residents' group.

At the Hearing the Council relied heavily on our arguments. In due course the Reporters produced their Report to the Council on the Local Plan. The Council does not have to accept the Reporters' recommendations, but has to pay a lot of attention to them. In the section on HSG 15 – the Zoo's proposals – the Reporters said that the Zoo should not be allowed the flats they proposed along their Corstorphine Road frontage or the houses on the upper part of the Hill, because both of these parts of the plan would have been very harmful to the appearance of the area. They also opposed the Zoo's proposed major road junction on Corstorphine Road with one road carrying the in and out traffic of the Zoo, the hotel and the 100 houses. However, they were sympathetic to the Zoo's financial problems and agreed to a "more limited housing allocation on surplus Zoo land with substantially fewer houses" and "strictly limited to only the middle part of the objection site" around the entrance from Kaimes Road.

While our local coalition welcomed the proposed reduction in the number of houses, we still felt very strongly that as a principle we opposed any houses being built on the Green Belt and Nature Reserve on Corstorphine Hill. In writing and as a deputation, we argued the case for no houses to the Planning Committee. Meanwhile the Planning officials had interpreted the Reporters' Report as allowing 80 houses spread over about 80% of the original site. Unfortunately the majority of the Committee voted for the officials' proposals.

We feel this is a serious distortion of the Reporters' recommendations and will continue to argue, whenever the Council procedures permit, that there should be far fewer than 80 houses on the site, if we cannot achieve our goal of no houses at all.

Donald Gorrie

Summer Walks

The walks this year have been well attended and blessed with good weather. In early May we had a Birdwatching walk when jays and buzzards were seen. In late May Brian Moffat took us for a comprehensive tour of the wildflowers of Corstorphine Hill which he has been studying for the last 2 years. He hopes to produce a species list and eventually a pictorial guide on our website. In June, Sarah Clarkson gave us another informative tour, this time of medicinal herbs that grow on the Hill and their various uses in Herbal Medicine. In July, and again in August, because of demand, Trish Alderson of Edinburgh and Lothian Badger Watch led evening badger watches, and each time we were able to see wild badgers at close range as they emerged from the sett. Later in July, Kirsty Straughan led a storytelling afternoon for young children in the Walled Garden, and in August, the day after the very successful Open Day, Gordon Swann led a hunt for bugs, butterflies and bees for children of all ages, in the Walled Garden. In September, David Adamson repeated his very popular Fungus Foray, to close our Season.

Tower Openings

Our volunteers have opened the Tower every 2 weeks on Sundays from 2-4 pm, May until October. We had extra open days in July for Homecoming, in August for the Open Day, and in September for Edinburgh Doors Open Day. There have been many more visitors this year than last, more than 50 in an afternoon on several occasions, which has helped to swell our funds. Thank you all for your time !

Subscriptions, Donations to FoCH

You can now pay your sub. Or make a donation in our collection boxes in the Dower House / Heritage Centre, High St. Corstorphine, and in Corstorphine and Blackhall libraries, so please put your pounds in our envelopes!

Evening Talks at the Capital Hotel, 2009 – 10, 7.30 pm.

October 27th , Tuesday, History of Cramond, by Doris Duncanson.

November 9th, visit to Beechwood House at the Spire Murrayfield Hospital at 6.30 Monday Please note that it is at it is at the Spire Hospital at 6.30 pm and **NOT** the Capital Hotel at 7.30 pm as are most of the evening meetings. **Numbers are limited therefore those wishing to attend must book tel 334 4769 Gordon Swann**

February 24th, Wednesday, Houses of Corstorphine Hill, by Alison Mackintosh.

March, 23rd, Tuesday, talk on Medicinal Herbs and where to find them, by Sarah Clarkson, local herbalist.

Friends of Corstorphine Hill

Registered as a charity No. SCO28842

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