

Friends of Corstorphine Hill

NEWSLETTER No.70



November 2021 Editor: Fred Davies Tel: 337 9232

www.corstorphinehill.org.uk



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Registered Charity No. SCO 28842

Chairman's Report.

Since June our activities have gradually returned to something like normal. The tower has been opened by our volunteers from late June until the end of September. We have had around 600 visitors and have raised about £500 in donations. We have had two guided walks around the Hill, and had a special event at the Tower to mark the 250th anniversary of Sir Walter Scott's birth. Bob Murray and his band, Noisy Shoes, provided musical entertainment with some of Scott's songs and music of the period. We also had two recitations of his poems. On the weekend of 25-26th September we opened for Doors Open Days and welcomed many visitors.

We hope to continue our events, talks and guided walks on the hill in 2022. Thanks to all our volunteers who made these activities possible!

We are looking at ways of collecting subscription and donations on line as many visitors no longer carry cash, and hope to have a better system operating by next spring.

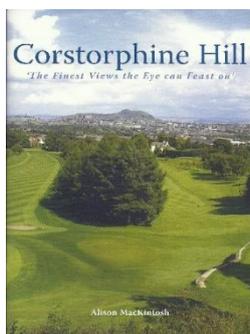
The Forest Kindergarten has started to operate near the Walled Garden giving nursery children an outdoor forest experience, following on from the success of the Forest School programme. Fox Covert Primary School will be using the Garden for a display of their Children's Rights project. You can see that the Hill is being well used by the local community organisations as well as walkers, dog walkers, runners, etc.

Remember that the Hill's woodland and the Walled Garden are lovely in Autumn, so please visit on a sunny day!

It's a bit early, but enjoy autumn and before too long the Festive Season!

Best wishes, **Gordon Swann, Chairman FoCH.**

Christmas Gift idea-----



Corstorphine Hill – The Finest Views the Eye can Feast on

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The widely reported 'late' autumn was reflected in certain aspects of the wildlife of Corstorphine Hill, with butterflies such as Speckled Wood and Small White on the wing into early October. Natterer's Bats, too, continued to feed along sheltered footpaths while there were moths to be found. On the bird front, also running late was the annual fly-past of Pink-footed Geese, southbound from Iceland, great skeins using the hill as a navigational landmark, a week behind their typical schedule and a fortnight later than in 2020.

Another autumn avian phenomenon is the gathering together of small songbirds (passerines) of different species into a composite feeding flock, the theory being that greater protection is afforded from predators such as Sparrowhawks. During this period it can seem that there are no birds on the hill – until the 'passerine flock' is encountered and there are birds everywhere! This year it numbered over 100 individuals, comprising Blue, Great, Coal and Long-tailed Tits, Chiffchaffs, Willow Warblers, and Blackcaps, with occasional Chaffinches, Dunnocks and migratory Spotted Flycatchers.

While Swallows were fewer in number this year (and Swifts sadly almost non-existent), other birds passing or dropping in included Greylag Goose, Mute Swan, Common Gull, Peregrine, Woodcock, Curlew, House Martin, Garden Warbler, Meadow Pipit, Rook and, new for the list, Gannet – making the grand total of species recorded 106.

For regular updates on seasonal sightings of birds and some of the other amazing wildlife on our doorstep, visit: <https://chilloutdoors.tumblr.com>

Ian Moore, Committee Member

Email Addresses.....

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The Corstorphine Hill Walled Garden update.....



After a winter with a protracted sting in its tail, the garden quickly recovered. Newly planted *Abelia grandiflora* was lost, and other tender plantings, *Abutilon* and *Solanum jasminoides*, on the north wall, severely set back. Let's hope for a milder winter next. The wild flower patch continues to revert to grassland, with a sprinkling of jollier species. Unfortunately, the yellow rattle, supposed guarantor of controlled grass, hasn't been told.

The year saw the Forest Kindergarten become fully functional, and we're pleased that they have chosen the garden, by the gate, as their arrival and dispatch point for the children.

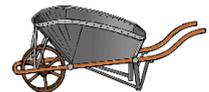
Other schools have continued to visit, and Fox Covert received permission to set up a display relating to "Child Rights". This was done by the half-term week, with the hope that children and their families will take an interest in the various items around the garden.

The garden has been well-used again, and the reviews on the Google site are generally very encouraging.

After the much lamented attack on the bee-hives in June 2020, we had another visit from a bee-expert, the upshot being that a low, sheltered, moist site, is not the best choice for bee hives, an open sunny site being preferable. Given that these areas are popular with people too, we gave up.

The expert talked about bee-boxes, which are a tidier and more tractable way of supporting bees, but this will be left to individuals to decide.

5 or 6 volunteers continue to battle the buttercup and its allies, and more would be welcome.



We were happy to continue our unbroken run of green flag awards into 2022.

Hugh Edwards Oct. 2021.

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Friends of Corstorphine Hill thank the following for their funding:-



City of Edinburgh Council Natural Heritage Service Report.

Autumn is a favourite season although the vibrant colours associated seem late this year (at the time of writing), a mild slouch into autumn still with plenty greenery on the trees!

We have been getting back into the swing of things with some of our conservation groups like the Green Team and the Conservation Volunteers returning to site activities such as invasive species clearance and path maintenance.

Forest Kindergarten are settling in nicely to the woodland area surrounding the walled garden; if you do see them out and about please say hello and consider there are small children receiving educational activities on a full-time basis, term-time Monday – Thursday (dogs on leads if you are in the vicinity is advisable).

Thank you to Clermiston Litterati who have been regular visitors to Corstorphine Hill, most recently clearing litter from the northern end in late September. The efforts involved are noticeable and much appreciated by all.

There have been a couple of large trees and limbs failing lately, reported through to us by some of the regular hill users. Our forestry squads were out promptly to deal with these: if you do see snapped branches hung up or lying over paths or trees that are leaning and perhaps look like they might fall, please let us know as soon as you encounter or suspect such an event.

Rest and be Thankful is a location on Corstorphine Hill familiar to many, none more so than Richard Van Hagen who was responsible for the restoration of the viewpoint in the late 1980's. Mr Van Hagen cleared the area, rebuilt the wall and installed two seats, one of which is dedicated to his father. He jogged up there every morning and carried out maintenance until he was no longer able. Very sadly, Mr Van Hagen passed away earlier this year. However, Mr Van Hagen's grandson aims to carry his grandfather's care of Rest and be Thankful into the future and ensure the space is kept up to scratch even possibly making his grandfather's collection of information and literary references to this area available to others. Thanks to the Van Hagen's for previous and ongoing care of the area.

As always, please get in touch with any concerns or pointers you may have –

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City of Edinburgh Council Forestry & Natural Heritage Service

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