

There has been a fair amount of activity on the hill over the winter period. We have continued salmonberry clearance work with the help of the Dirty Weekendors from Edinburgh Uni and the Lothian Conservation Volunteers. A couple of local people who enjoy the hill have also been contributing towards keeping salmonberry at bay, Nigel has been clearing path edge stands for a while now and he has recently been joined by Alasdair who, when they can, get together and tackle a problem area. If you see them, pass on good wishes as it is a tough task!

Buglife have been involved with some tree and hedge planting on the western flanks of the hill, all native tree species with the hedging full of fruit bearing species. We've thickened up the hedge along Clermiston Road and will hopefully complete the whole length over a few seasons, the hedge will be left to grow up a bit to provide more habitat with timely cuts once the birds have foraged. Over the next few weeks we aim to supplement the relaxed grass sward with yellowrattle seeds and other wildflower plugs promoting more biodiversity – yellowrattle is great for parasitizing rank grass which creates open areas within the grass sward that other more beneficial species can then utilise in turn enriching the area.

On the north eastern perimeter you may have noticed some tree and earth works. The area was very wet and causing nuisance to several neighbouring properties. Infrastructure was installed several years ago aimed at dealing with the problem but had subsequently failed or become choked/blocked. Some open ditching and clearance of water flows has been undertaken with the creation of monolith trees that were becoming waterlogged and posing risk. Several hundred shrubs and trees with a high percentage of willow and alder have been planted in the immediate area with the aim of soaking up more water as they establish.

Forest Kindergarten is a pilot scheme Edinburgh Council's Early Years Team are running with the aim of providing for the increased provision of nursery care for under 5's. Successful pilots have been undertaken at Cammo Estate LNR and other sites. There is a requirement for some temporary facilities to ensure such provision can occur in an area like Corstorphine Hill which is now included in the wider roll out of the project. 2 bespoke shipping containers are to be located on the boundary of the field area and wooded tree line immediately below Corstorphine Hill Community Walled Garden. This is not too far from the access point on Clermiston Road to enable ease of children getting to and from the site. The children are likely to be from nurseries clustered round the local area, they will likely use the facility and site for educational purposes and exploration Monday - Thursday 8am - 4pm term time. There has been some local consultation and more to follow. The aim is to have everything in place for the start of term after summer holidays 2020.

If you use the site and in particular the areas close to the walled garden, please keep in mind there will be small children with teachers in the area, an established location will become apparent where the main activities will take place, children will be eating snack and lunch outside so it is particularly important for dogs to be kept to heel or on a lead when approaching. Commercial and professional dog walkers or people with multiple dogs will be encouraged to use other areas of the site. Look out for more information either through the Friends of Corstorphine or out on site.

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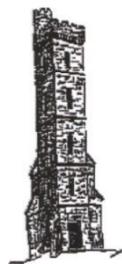
Tel: 0131 311 7078

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Jean Knox- Open Garden. 95 Oxbgangs Road, Edinburgh

My garden opening this year will be on **Sunday 31 May, 2 - 5pm**

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Friends of Corstorphine Hill



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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The 2 winter talks so far, 'The work of Friends of Cammo', and 'Wildlife of the Forth Catchment' have been well attended. The third is on Wednesday 18th March, when George Anderson of 'The Beechgrove Garden' will talk about "Travels in Chile".

Last year we had over 1000 visitors to the tower, about 400 on Doors Open Days, and we look forward to another successful season.

In the Committee, Rowan Muir and Ruaridh D are working on improving the FoCH website and we are also discussing a Communications Strategy to publicise what we do more widely and effectively.

Forest Kindergarten, a development from Forest Schools wish to start a programme on the Hill and we are negotiating with them and CEC how this can best be done.

I attend meetings of the Edinburgh Greenspaces Forum (formerly friends of Parks Forum) and we recently had a meeting hosted by Parks and Greenspaces at the City Chambers. Among many interesting presentations were:

Fire Health and Safety in parks, by a liaison officer from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

We will follow this up as we had major issues with wildfires in the early summer.

My Parks Scotland, who could organise us a Text Donation Service.

CEC, who as usual are facing cuts in the forthcoming budget, have been allowed to fill 10 posts in Parks and Greenspaces which had been frozen, and invest in some new machinery. Please be aware that their staff is now a fraction of what it was 5 years ago, so they rely hugely on Friends Groups and other volunteers for the maintenance and development of parks.

Undoubtedly this situation will get worse not better in future, so lobby your Councillor about the importance of our beautiful Edinburgh parks!

On a positive note CEC recently received an award of around £1 million from the Future Parks Development Fund. This is to be spent on developing a long-term plan for parks and greenspaces in Edinburgh. I will keep you informed of developments.

Tree Time: this is an initiative to replace our ageing trees in public and private spaces in Edinburgh.

Many of the lovely trees we take for granted were planted in the 19th century and are nearing the end of their lives. We need to replace them by planting. Tree Time seeks to encourage organisations and individuals to sponsor tree planting. Our Hill is an ideal place and memorial trees to loved ones would be a great way forward. Please contact me for more details.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL (£1) Most memberships are due between January and March each year. We enclose/attach with this Newsletter a renewal membership form for completion and return with your fee/donation. It is important that we keep our files up to date each year, so your prompt return would be appreciated, this will also ensure that you get your Newsletter as usual.

SPRING PROGRAMME

All talks are at Leonardo Murrayfield Hotel, Clermiston Road. 7.30pm

Wednesday 18th March

"Travels in Chile"



A talk by George Anderson {Beechgrove Garden}

The talk recounts a visit George made to Chile with the Friends of The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.

Saturday 28th March History and Geology of Corstorphine Hill. A popular walk led by Gordon Swann
10am till 12pm. Meet at the Walled Garden

Saturday 25th April Birds of Corstorphine Hill.
Walk led by Ian Moore 9am till 11am Meet at Rest and Be Thankful

Sunday 7th June

Wildflower Walk led by Brian Moffat. 2-4 pm
Meet in the Walled Garden at 2 pm.

CORSTORPHINE WOODS by Helen Cruickshank

Ravens are kekkin' prophesies o' woe,
Pyots in black an' 'white spiel superstitions,
The rooks mak' bedlam I' the elms below,
An' 'saft winged hoolets plan their midnight missions.

Among the haws an' brambles whinchats clink,
The blue tits flit among their ferny covers,
The greedy gulls ahint the ploo-tail sink,
An' hidden cushats croodle low like lovers.

Heich I' the frosty air, uneirdly cries
Tell that a gaggle o' wild geese are flightin'
Luik! there they are against parchment skies,
Like movin brush o' ancient Chinese writin'

Near hame the ruif-heid raws o' starlins haud
Their evenin' guild o' scandal and o' chatter,
And sparrows, randy gossips, rogue or jaud,
Scavenge their hindmost crumb wi' fuss an' clatter

And as I roond the corner, best of a'
The mavis, singing on my gavel wa'
Happy I am, altho' I bide my lane,
To ha'e a singin' hert that's a' my ain.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday 15th April. 7.30pm

Dower House, St. Margaret's Park. Refreshments

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WINTER BIRD REPORT

Few visitors to the hill in recent months can have failed to encounter the Great Spotted Mudpecker, and it is the prolonged spell of wet rather than really cold weather that has influenced the birdlife during this period.



There have been relatively few winter migrants – occasional sightings of Siskin, Redpoll, Brambling and Crossbill – when normally the seed-bearing trees provide a reliable larder for many birds driven south by harsh conditions. However, a group of Icelandic Redwings – up to 50 on occasion – has frequented the hill, first consuming all the holly berries and haws, before moving to forage for invertebrates in the leaf litter. For the first time in three years the regular gull flock in the Clermiston area contained no overwintering Lesser Black-backs, although a group of 6 put in an appearance in late February; these may be early returners from the south. Black-headed Gulls are already acquiring their summer plumage, and in the woods many of the resident species began setting up territories almost as soon as the day length began to change in December.

With about a dozen species lost from the hill in recent years, an encouraging sighting was a pair of Collared Doves on 7th February, perhaps to make a return to the area. Birds observed passing during the period included Grey Heron, Goosander, Pink-footed Goose and Oystercatcher.

For regular flora & fauna updates visit:

<https://chilloutdoors.tumblr.com> or connect via the 'web links' page on the FoCH website. Ian Moore

CORSTORPHINE WOODS by Helen B Cruickshank..

Helen Cruickshank grew up in Angus before WW1, speaking the local dialect. A contemporary of Lewis Grassie Gibbon, who grew up not far away. She moved to London and worked as a Civil servant after WW1. In the 1950s she came back to Scotland to care for her mother and lived at 'Dinniduff' 4 Hillpark Terrace. She wrote poetry and prose all her life and was a great champion of Scots Literature at that time, promoting Lewis Grassie Gibbon and Hugh McDairmid among others. She lived in Corstorphine for the last 20 years of her long life, and loved the Hill. Many of her poems are about the countryside and nature.