

# Friends of Corstorphine Hill

## NEWSLETTER No.69



Update 2021 Editor: Fred Davies Tel: 337 9232

[www.corstorphinehill.org.uk](http://www.corstorphinehill.org.uk)



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Registered Charity No. SCO 28842

### Chairman's Report.

Dear Friends,

It looks as if life will slowly return to more or less normal over the next month or two. Work has continued on the Hill where there has been quite a bit of damage due to increased use over the last year, and the construction of the Forest Kindergarten facility by the Clermiston Road Gate. David K and his team are working hard as usual to repair the situation. Our volunteers are continuing to work in the Walled Garden which is looking beautiful in Spring.

We are hoping to start some outdoor events such as guided walks and tower visits in June. This will obviously depend on having enough willing volunteers to help, so please consider if you can spare some time at weekends to help us re start our programme. The Council have given us permission, but what we do must follow the current Government Covid Safety Guidelines :

Visitors will require to book in advance with me for walks and Tower visits. Numbers will be limited, at present 6 people but probably more by June. We will need to provide hand sanitisation, and keep Test and Trace records. Visitors will require to wear masks and observe social distancing, as we have all been doing for the last year. As with everything it will all be a bit different, but we are all used to these restrictions by now. I hope we can have a successful summer season and that the weather will be kind.

Best wishes, Gordon Swann, Chairman FoCH.

### **STOP PRESS....**

**The Tower will re-open for visitors every Sunday from 20<sup>th</sup> June. See elsewhere in this Newsletter for further details on walks.**

**We are in great need of volunteers for Tower duty, to enable us to keep it open throughout the summer.**

**If you can spare just 1 Sunday or even 2 per month till the end of September, please contact Gordon Swann on 337 4769 or e-mail:**

**[gandmswann@gmail.com](mailto:gandmswann@gmail.com)**

## CORSTORPHINE HILL BIRD REPORT 2021



In March one of the first signs of spring is the northbound migration of Pink-footed Geese, which use Corstorphine Hill as a navigation beacon. Between 7<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> large skeins, sometimes 200 birds strong, took advantage of high pressure to begin their return flight to Iceland. Meanwhile, Lesser Black-backed Gulls, which leave Edinburgh to winter as far south as Iberia, were rediscovering their regular haunts around the fringes of the reserve. Despite the generally cold weather, the first Chiffchaffs arrived on 17<sup>th</sup>, about a week ahead of the average for the past five years. April is usually the most frenetic month for migration, and 2021 was no exception.

Passage migrants that stopped off to feed included Common and Lesser Redpolls, Siskins, Garden Warbler and Pied Flycatcher; the latter only the second record in 15 years. Good numbers of Blackcaps and Willow Warblers (both breeding species) began to appear from the first week of the month, along with more Chiffchaffs. Meadow Pipits were streaming north at dawn on 10<sup>th</sup>, along with a group of 12 late-returning Fieldfares, probably Scandinavian birds.

Then, more summer visitors were recorded, with a House Martin on 23<sup>rd</sup> and the first Swallows feeding in the area on 26<sup>th</sup>.

In May the final arrivals were Whitethroats on 7<sup>th</sup> (a scrub warbler that winters in West Africa) and Swifts, which winter in Central/Southern Africa, first seen feeding over the hill on 10<sup>th</sup>. At about the same time resident Starlings invaded to gorge on hatching Hawthorn flies (the swarming black hovering things with dangly legs – perfectly harmless and known to the trout angler as *Biblio*). Other birds passing or dropping in included Fulmar, Cormorant, Grey Heron, Oystercatcher, Mallard, Canada Goose, Mute Swan, Great Black-backed Gull, Rook and Raven. In total 66 species were recorded during the three spring months.

On the broader wildlife front, up to five Roe Deer were sighted almost daily, Natterer's Bats have been on the wing since late April, and spring butterflies spotted to date include Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Orange Tip and Speckled Wood.

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

## **The Corstorphine Hill Walled Garden 2021.**

The garden was well-used by local people throughout 2020, and, judging by the comments received, much appreciated, and this was reflected in the lack of litter.

The winter minimum temperature was around minus 10 degrees, despite which the only loss appears to be the *Abelia grandiflora* planted in May 2020, which started to regrow in late March, only to be re-frosted to extinction. The donated *Exochorda*, being tougher, is thriving.

There have been no major changes, as we wait for the shrubs along the north path to fully establish; equally the shrubs in the 2 triangular beds down near the boardwalk area.

The number of volunteers varies year by year, and currently we're down to 5 or 6 active participants. As the weeds thrive, extra pairs of hands would be welcome.

Other than the vandalising of the bee-hives, nuisance activity has been restrained until, recently, someone has been nibbling at the crown of the wall, down at the utility area. With the team being less nimble, this is a problem which the City of Edinburgh Council is considering.

**Hugh Edwards**

May 2021.

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### **TOWER OPENING AND EVENTS.**

**Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> June**, Tower opens 2-4pm,  
**Visitors must pre book** for a 15 min slot.  
Masks to be worn.

We continue every Sunday until end of September.

#### **Saturday 26th June**

Birds and other wildlife on the Hill,  
Led by Ian Moore. Meet at the Walled garden 9.00am.

**Must be pre booked, numbers limited.**

**Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> July** Exotic & Alien Plants of Corstorphine Hill,  
Led by Dr Brian Moffat, meet at Walled Garden at 2pm.

**Must be pre booked, numbers limited.**

**ALL BOOKINGS BY PHONE OR EMAIL TO GORDON SWANN  
FIRST COME FIRST SERVED BASIS.**

**Tel: 0131 334 4769**

**e-mail: [gandmswann@gmail.com](mailto:gandmswann@gmail.com)**



**ANNIVERSARY YEAR.**

**Sir Walter Scott**

**250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Born August 1771**

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**Corstorphine Hill Tower – 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
(also known as Clermiston Tower or the Scott Tower).**

**Situated close to the hill's summit, it was built in 1871 by William Macfie of Clermiston to commemorate the centenary of the birth of [Sir Walter Scott](#).**

**It was gifted to the city in 1932 to mark the centenary of Scott's death.**



We published a book called



**“Corstorphine Hill – The Finest Views the Eye Can Feast On”  
which gives a history of the hill.**

**Copies are still available at £5 + £1.50 post from.....**

**Fred Davies, 5 Saughtonhall Place Edinburgh. EH12 5RH Tel: 0131 337 9232  
(cheques payable to “Friends of Corstorphine Hill” )**

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



## ***City of Edinburgh Council Natural Heritage Service Report.***

Corstorphine Hill Local Nature Reserve has played an important part in local people's lives over the last year or so. With the pandemic resultant in limited travel, green spaces like this have become a solace for people to refresh themselves, exercise, enjoy nature and so much more. From a management view, this is noticeable through increased wear on path verges, new desired lines popping up through vegetation and undergrowth, increased demand for facilities and of course an increase in the amount of litter encountered. I collect where I can and I know others do too, many thanks to those who take their own rubbish away with them but especially those who collect others' waste or report to me for attention. Special thanks to Clermiston Litterati whose work is especially noticeable.

There's also been a bit of graffiti appearing on site furniture including the Tower door which has now been repainted as have some of the seats. There are a few still required to be repainted alongside some new graffiti that has appeared on the eastern boundary wall at the Balgreen entrance. Also, down by the Balgreen entrance, it was brought to my attention that there had been some ground disturbance for the purposes of mountain bike trail feature construction earlier in the year. Historically, Corstorphine Hill alongside a few other parks in Edinburgh has been used for biking activities. The area in question on Corstorphine Hill retains old features associated with growing plants as the area was once a nursery and has held such trail features for many years, well built, solid and bedded in. After making contact with various people involved and engaging with industry experts, we now have a clearer understanding enabling us to move forward. As landowners, the Council have a duty of care to uphold and with that comes certain liabilities. Through consideration of ground conditions and habitat, spoil pits/mounds, possible user conflict, the size and type of construction of features, other site hazards..... we hope to be able to achieve a level of comfort that most people are satisfied with.

Forest Kindergarten are now settling into their new pods (below wg) and woodland site (above wg) delivering nursery education in the outdoor environment. There are still some remedials to undertake in the immediate vicinity of the pods but children seem to be benefitting greatly already. The children undertake all their daily activities outside including eating snacks and lunch so if you regularly walk dogs over that part of the hill, keeping dogs on a lead is desired. Other general site management tasks lately include:

Replacement path edge fencing at the northern end of the site  
Clearance of overhanging vegetation from some formal path edges  
Removal of path edge salmonberry as part of INNS week (path edge only due to the possibility of nesting birds further within)  
Removal of rope swings as encountered  
Removal of litter/drinking debris/fire debris as encountered/reported  
Mechanical path surface scraping of the eastern path (by chain link fence) above 10<sup>th</sup> hole of Murrayfield GC – more to do!  
Liaison with City Fibre regarding the poor reinstatement work undertaken to the path surface on Tower Drive after fibre cable laying  
Request for memorial tree received through <https://www.tree-time.com>  
Capital budget bid made for south side access path upgrades.

**David Kyles** [naturalheritageservice@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:naturalheritageservice@edinburgh.gov.uk)  
**City of Edinburgh Council Forestry & Natural Heritage Service**  
**Inverleith Farm House, Inverleith Park, 5 Arboretum Place, Edinburgh EH3 5NY**

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