

Friends of Corstorphine Hill

NEWSLETTER No.64



Spring 2019 Editor: Fred Davies Tel: 337 9232

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Registered Charity No. SCO 28842

Chairman's Report.

The last talk of 2018 was by Peter McDougall about the Saughtonhall Park project. The park should be fully open in March. In November Gordon attended a civic reception at the City Chambers attended by the Depute Lord Provost, Councillors, and officials to formally thank the Parks, Greenspaces and Cemeteries Department, and Friends of Parks groups for their achievements in gaining 32 Green Flag Awards for the City's parks. This is the highest in Scotland, and one of the highest in the UK. It is good to have our hard work appreciated by our elected representatives. CEC freely admit that this could not have been achieved without the huge efforts of Friends groups.

On December 2nd Gordon and some intrepid members of the Tower volunteers team opened the Tower am and pm as part of the Edinburgh's Christmas 24 Doors of Advent. It was quite a lot to organise, and unfortunately the weather was not kind, so we had about 35 visitors. Thanks to all who assisted! We still hope to put up a plaque on the Tower to commemorate the 2018 repairs and inform visitors of our opening hours. Obtaining permission for this seems to be a slow process, but I will keep trying. On Sunday 10th March Scurry About will have a family fun run event of 5 or 10 Km around the Hill. It starts about 9.00am with registration in the Leonardo Hotel. FoCH will provide some Marshals, and Scurry About will give us a donation. All welcome, as runners, Marshals or spectators!

I represent FoCH on the Edinburgh Greenspaces forum (EGSF), formerly Edinburgh Friends of Parks Forum. The Forum has been busy this year:

Our Chairman, John Kerr represented Edinburgh Friends Groups at the meeting of the Local Government and Communities Committee at Holyrood last autumn, to discuss Scottish Government support for Parks and Greenspaces.

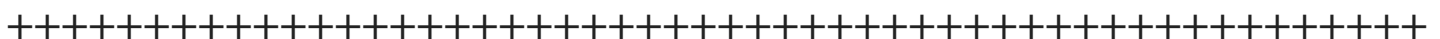
We also signed up to the Parks Charter, a UK initiative to try to gain more support (i.e money) from government for parks and greenspaces.

EGSF is one of the partners supporting CEC in their bid for the 'Future Parks Accelerator'. This is a large pot of money provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the National Trust which will be awarded to 6 UK Local Authorities to carry out major 20 year projects to develop their parks and greenspaces. CEC is the only Scottish Local authority in the running to gain one of these awards. the lucky winners should hear in May-June this year.

This is the time of year to renew your membership.

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.

As with last year, (for people who get a paper copy of the Newsletter) a membership form which is aimed at NEW members is enclosed, and we would ask that current members distribute it to neighbours and friends. Thank you on behalf of the committee for your continued support.



Note: We are now on Facebook, Instagram & Twitter. Search for FOCH or Friends of Corstorphine Hill where you can check for event news.

SPRING PROGRAMME

Saturday 30th March

The History and Geology of Corstorphine Hill.

This walk will be taken by Gordon Swann.

Featuring many of the hill's prominent points.

Meet at the Walled Garden 2pm



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday 16th April 2019

Heritage Centre, St Margaret's Park, Corstorphine High Street.

7.30pm (Refreshments)

Saturday 4th May

"The Birds and the Trees" The importance of some of the hill's 40+ tree varieties to particular species of birds.

A walk led by Ian Moore

Meet at 9am. (Allow 2 hours)



Meeting Point-Clearing at the top of Beechwood south slope (just through the stone 'arch' after "Rest & Be Thankful")

Sunday 12th May **"Herbs & Flowers on Corstorphine Hill"**

A walk led by Dr Brian Moffat. **Meet at the Walled Garden. 2pm**

**Corstorphine Hill Tower will be open every Sunday
2pm-4pm from 5th May until end of September.**

Jean Knox Garden, 95 Oxfangs Road, Edinburgh.

Sunday 12th May. (More details on Scotland's Garden Scheme website)

Here's a date for your diary - I'm opening my garden this year on **Sunday 12 May**. I chose mid May so that visitors would see a different range of plants at their best. Hopefully a lovely display of tulips and rhododendrons. Fingers crossed!



But, whatever the weather, the home baking will be as scrumptious as ever and Tosh (the only cat I have at the moment) is looking forward to welcoming you all and having a chat with you. He's really been brushing up his interpersonal skills!

WINTER BIRD REPORT



While January 2019 was colder than last year, overall the winter has been bright, mild and dry. The hill has seen a third more sunny days, February temperatures 4C higher than in 2018, and only 2 inches of rain since the beginning of December

It is not surprising, therefore, that resident birds have begun establishing territories earlier than usual. In fact, they detect the change in day length after the winter solstice – Mistle Thrushes, habitually early breeders, wasted little time, and were in song by Christmas Day... Great Tits followed on Boxing Day... and Coal Tits on the 27th! By the end of February, nineteen species were singing, and many visitors have commented upon the abundant birdsong in the woods.

It has also been a good season for winter migrants, with sightings of Bramblings for the first time in many years, along with Waxwings, Crossbills, Siskins, Redpolls, Redwings and Fieldfares – all of these come to feed on the plentiful fruits and seeds provided by over 40 species of trees that thrive on the hill.

The regular gull flock in the Clermiston area reached a peak of around 100 in early February, made up of Herring, Common and Black-headed Gulls, along with a handful of over-wintering Lesser Black-backs – the latter being mainly a summer migrant to Edinburgh.

Other birds noted from the hill during the winter period included Grey Heron, Cormorant, Mallard, Goosander, Pink-footed Goose, Pheasant, Oystercatcher, Woodcock, Grey Wagtail and Raven. 54 species were recorded in total.

For regular flora & fauna updates visit: <https://chilloutdoors.tumblr.com> or connect via the 'web links' page on the FoCH website.

Ian Moore

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



City of Edinburgh Council Natural Heritage Service Report.

Birds nesting in early February (southern England), record breaking February temperatures.....let's hope it doesn't freeze soon as I suspect many bird species in our region are also ahead of the game this year. We will continue our efforts in controlling the spread of the invasive salmonberry across the hill, we normally continue this until the beginning of nesting season but may have to curtail slightly this year if the mild weather continues.

Around November time last year, it was brought to my attention that some "bits" of animal were being pulled from the undergrowth by dogs enticed in by the scent. The "bits" turned out to be a fully butchered juvenile roe deer. The head, carcass and some other pieces were removed from site and disposed of. Police Scotland local Wildlife Crime Officer was issued with details. We are unsure how the deer was caught but suspect it was caught and butchered on Corstorphine Hill. The Evening News a few weeks later reported a similar incident in the Granton area where witnesses saw 3 men with dogs bring a deer down (mid-afternoon), kill and cart off. Although hugely difficult to determine some people's intent, should anything suspicious be encountered please let Police Scotland (101) and myself know.

In conjunction with the bunker owners towards the north of the hill, we constructed a temporary footpath made from woodchip. This is to provide an alternative to the main track that leads to the bunker alleviating any conflict between vehicles and walkers. With the bunker facility moving forward and at some point in the near future welcoming visitors, safe permanent access provision for attraction visitors and hill users will be made.

We have again teamed up with Buglife to improve biodiversity within relaxed or low maintenance grass areas. The plan is to scarify areas, introduce wildflower seed and plug plants, cut on an appropriate schedule which will disperse seed over wider areas once established. Small improvements to biodiversity like this can have very beneficial effects to the pollinator population locally.

Some bounding residents had notified me again over a long-standing issue related to water run-off from the hill into private gardens. After seeking advice on legislative matters and speaking with colleagues in Flood Prevention we are now at a stage whereby a definitive stance has been taken by the Council and are hopeful an amicable resolution will be achieved. When adjacent development occurs next to natural areas, especially dolerite rocky outcrops, it is accepted that water will flow downwards either overland or through cracks and fissures. As long as this water is not being directly channelled towards or over boundaries, it is up to the cross boundary owner to intercept and deal with if required. Some historic developments (and some more recent) either do not take this into account or construct infrastructure to deal with the issue and then never maintain.

There's been some anti-social behaviour over the last period, some litter (drinking and fire debris) we have cleared some and some has been cleared by regular hill users, I am very grateful to those who do clear mess when encountered. There's also been some damage to juvenile trees where they've been hacked for firewood, again, if anyone encounters this or the aftermath please let me know, contact details below. We have also arranged for the graffiti at the Balgreen Road/Corstorphine Road junction entrance to be removed from the wall and the slightly wider access point along from here towards the hospital entrance has been cleared of fly-tipped waste.

**David Kyles - City of Edinburgh Council Forestry and Natural Heritage –
Natural Heritage Officer - Inverleith Farmhouse, Inverleith Park, 5 Arboretum
Place, Edinburgh, EH3 5NY - 0131 529 2421 -**

[http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20064/parks and green spaces](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20064/parks-and-green-spaces)