

Friends of Corstorphine Hill

NEWSLETTER No. 26

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Editor: Les Hutcheon Tel 334 3832

The Current Team

At the AGM held on 20th April, the Chairman in his report thanked all those who had helped or contributed in some way to the organisation over the past year. As he listed activities as diverse as newsletter distribution to wall maintenance, it became apparent how much the membership participated and shared in the success the Friends have achieved. And he stressed that volunteers were always welcome.

Alec Lamb retired from the committee and was thanked for his stalwart services as treasurer. Eddie Price stepped down having served three years but had indicated his willingness to stand again. Eddie was duly re-elected as chairman without opposition. Three members of the committee who had been co-opted at various stages throughout the year were officially confirmed as members of the committee at the AGM.

Here is a list of the current committee with their contact telephone numbers and their specific committee responsibilities, should members wish to get in touch.

Eddie Price	Chairman	539 1088	
Alister Hayes	Secretary		
Fred Davies	Treasurer	337 9232	
Willma Carroll	committee	476 5594	Tower Opening Rota and Friends liaison with the Corstorphine Fair
Martin Craven	committee	334 1247	Membership secretary and primary news letter distribution
Les Hutcheon	committee	334 3832	Newsletter editor and liaison with tree warden network
Alison MacKintosh	committee		Publicity and public relations
Eddie MacLennan	committee	539 0836	Assists Eddie at talks and presentations Keeps photographic records
Cecilia McPherson	committee	539 1074	Organises winter talks programme
Os Wallace	committee	334 3343	Organises walled garden gate rota and other technical advice
Alan White	committee	336 5199	Walled garden planting co-ordinator and Newsletter distribution

Alan, both Eddies, Fred, Martin, Os and Les are frequently to be found on Tuesday mornings and Thursday afternoons along with other volunteers in the walled garden.

Zoo Plans

Last year, following the AGM, we were fortunate to have David Windmill, chief executive at the Zoo, tell us how the long-term plans were progressing. On this occasion Iain Valentine, who is head of animals, conservation and research was kind enough to keep us informed about the activities of our neighbours on the Hill. Iain explained that the overall strategy for the master plan had been formed. The aim is to form four different habitat types and to populate them with animals which live in these habitats in the wild. The habitat types or "biomes" are oceans and wetlands, grassland, woodland and tropical forest. It was stressed that there was no intention to roof over the zone to achieve the tropical effect. The plan will be implemented progressively over the next 20 years and will begin with a new chimpanzee enclosure. The changing role of zoos to conservation and education is something with which the Friends can identify.

An exhibition showing the master plan is available for anyone interested. It was clarified that it was free because it is located in the entrance hall thus can be viewed without having to gain entrance to the Zoo.

The area identified for potential housing on the western perimeter of the Zoo, was clarified as being mainly to the south of the exit gate located at the Old Kirk Road junction and Kaimes Road.

Concern was expressed about the boundary shown on the exhibition because one of the biomes appeared to encroach well beyond the existing Zoo boundary. Iain assured his audience that the plan did not involve the Zoo extending its boundary to the north. The area in question, would not be within the Zoo perimeter, however, longer term planning did not exclude the possibility of mutual use of the land suitably improved and which Zoo visitors could pass through in order to get to another part of the site.

Iain was thanked for his presentation and answering the questions which are of importance to the Friends. He promised to continue to keep in touch with regard to the development, which is much appreciated.

Zoo Visit

During his talk Iain suggested an evening visit to the Zoo after normal hours to see and hear more about the care of the animals. Such a visit is a real privilege and it has been arranged for Thursday evening 22 June. Anyone interested should be at the main entrance at 7.30 pm. Entrance is free to Friends but be prepared to buy your cup of tea. Numbers are not restricted but it would be useful, if you do intend to go on the visit, to give me a ring (334 3832) so that we have an idea of how many will be there. This guided walk is in addition to our usual Sunday guided walks in the summer pointing out items of interest on the Hill. What our neighbours on the Hill and their charges are involved in, is integral to our interests.

Summer Guided Walks

Guided walks pointing out features of plants or the formation of the Hill are regular features organised by the Friends. Once having been on one of these walks, even if you do not remember all of the detail, every time you go for a walk on the Hill, it will be enhanced by what you learned. Here is our summer programme.

All the walks will last about 2 hours and suitable footwear and clothing is advised. Binoculars or magnifier lenses where appropriate are not essential but recommended. With the exception of the first walk, which starts at 10.00 am (early birds catching the worm) all the rest start at 2.00 pm.

Sunday 28 May Bird Walk led by Martin Craven Meet in the Walled Garden.

Sunday 11 June Wild Flowers led by MaryRobertson. Meet in the Walled Garden. Mary is a real expert and you will see flowers you never noticed before.

Sunday 9 July Trees led by Max Coleman. Meet in the Walled Garden. Max is Trees and Woodlands Project Officer Natural Heritage Section of City of Edinburgh Council. He essentially runs the Tree Warden Scheme for Edinburgh. He can tell us about the tree wardens in general and about specific trees at Corstorphine.

Sunday 17 September Fungi led by David Adamson. Meet at Kaimes Road car park. David is a well known fungi expert and has pointed out the details of this strange life form growing on the Hill before.

If you are interested just turn up on the day and join in. If you have any queries you can contact me Les Hutcheon on 334 3832.

I've contacted the walk leaders this year but am looking for someone, perhaps with fresh ideas, to take over this task for next year.

Tower Openings

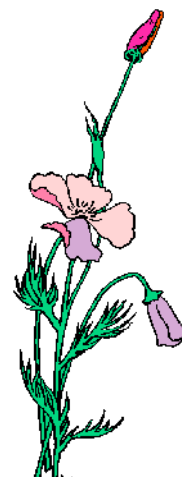
A reminder that the Tower will be open on alternate Sunday afternoons between 2.00 and 4.00 pm, starting on 4 June through till 24 September.

Corstorphine Fair

Corstorphine Fair will be held on Saturday 3 June at St Margaret's Park. This popular event will be open from 11.00 am till 4.00 pm and the Friends of Corstorphine Hill will be represented at the Fair.

Plug the Marsh

The wetland area has been planted out with a variety of plug plants which should become established over the summer



Badgers on Corstorphine Hill

You may have noticed two strange looking people carrying buckets around the hill over the last two months! We are students from the University of Edinburgh doing research on the badgers on the hill. There are four main setts on Corstorphine Hill, including one within the zoo grounds. Each sett has a distinct territory where they forage, which they mark at the edges with latrines. We have been feeding the badgers a mixture of peanuts, syrup and small coloured pellets. It is then our delightful job to find out where they deposit our pellets!

This tells us the size and shape of each territory. The badgers also forage in surrounding areas so if you have noticed any pellets in your garden we would be delighted to hear from you. We are also hoping to conduct a short survey in the coming weeks which some of you may receive, so please take a few minutes to fill it out. If you have any questions/comments we can be contacted by email (murphy_eimear@yahoo.com / claire.calder@hotmail.com) or phone (079 62639386). Thank you!

Eimear Murphy & Claire Calder

Woodland Management Update

Path Works

Visitors to Corstorphine Hill over the Spring probably couldn't help noticing large construction vehicles on the site! At the time of writing this, the path works are coming to completion with over 7000 metres (7 km) of new and upgraded whin paths having been constructed. Three of these routes have been created as management routes for forestry and maintenance vehicles. Turning circles have been created in a few locations to assist with maneuvering and stacking timber.

The woodland paths on the top of the hill were intended for construction next year, however construction was brought forward in the interests of best value and reducing disturbance over a prolonged period.

I hope everyone will enjoy the improved access on Corstorphine Hill and without the need for wellington boots!

Tree Planting

20,340 trees were planted on Corstorphine Hill, the majority of which are native broadleaves. The planting contractor found some areas difficult to drive stakes into the ground due to the stone content of the ground, however he has succeeded in accomplishing a good job. He will continue to maintain the planting over the growing season, ensuring that weed growth does not compete with the trees.

As much as we all wish for a good summer, we should also hope for rain! We have had a dry winter and spring which doesn't help the establishment of the trees.

Next year new signage, waymarkers and interpretation boards will be installed around the site.

I hope that everyone will agree that in a relatively short period of time, Corstorphine Hill has been greatly improved. The benefits of the management works will become more apparent over the next few years when the new planting establishes.

Jane Bilous Trees & Woodlands Officer

Friends of Corstorphine Hill

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