

Friends of Corstorphine Hill

NEWSLETTER No.54



AUTUMN/WINTER 2015 Editor: Fred Davies Tel: 337 9232

www.corstorphinehill.org.uk

(e-mail: daviesfd@bluevonder.co.uk)

Registered Charity No. SCO 28842

Chairman's Report.

The Tower has been very busy with visitors most Sundays and we expect our highest attendances, as previous years on Door Open Days on the 26th and 27th September. Many thanks to all our volunteers. A few weeks ago a young couple asked if they could visit the Tower to become engaged, and we arranged this for them on 1st August. They were delighted with the experience and gave us a generous donation. The walks on the Hill have been fairly well supported, and the weather has been kind. The last one, the Fungus Foray is on 27th September.

You will see we also have our programme of Autumn-Winter evening talks starting in October.

Natural Heritage Service Reports

David Kyles gives the committee a report at each meeting for which we are very grateful. Main points from recent reports are :

As usual, diseased or dangerous trees have been felled. Many groups of volunteers have been organised by David to work on path maintenance and to remove Himalayan Balsam, which is encroaching on more parts of the Hill. On 28th October, Parks day, there will be a large group of CEC staff, Greenspace members, Forestry staff, and others, working to dig out Canadian Salmonberry, another invasive alien species which is spreading over the Hill. Please come along and join in.

There have also been measures to try to make cycling safer on the Hill by improving paths, and also to control speeds on busy paths using chicanes and signage.

Lastly, you have probably noticed the reduced grass cutting regime on the meadows as part of the Living Landscapes project. It seems to be favourably received so far but give us your comments.

New Edition of the history of Corstorphine Hill by Alison Mackintosh

In spite of poor health, Alison has prepared a revised and updated version of her excellent book, which will soon go to the printer. We give her our grateful thanks for all her work for us under very difficult personal circumstances, and our best wishes for her recovery.

Gordon Swann (Chairperson)

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS.

We are currently updating our membership records, so that we can send you your Newsletter and keep you informed of all events.

Membership renewals and donations can be sent to:-

Gordon Swann (Chairman), 1 Dovecot Road, Edinburgh EH12 7LF

Fred Davies (Treasurer), 5 Saughtonhall Place, Edinburgh EH12 5RH or placed in any of our boxes in the following, Corstorphine Library, Blackhall Library, Drumbrae Library Hub and Balgreen Library

WINTER TALKS PROGRAMME

All talks are held in the Capital Hotel, Clermiston Road, Edinburgh at 7.30pm

“There is a tide in the affairs of men....

The Story of Global Climate Change”.



Thursday 29th October 7.30pm

Professor Anthony Seaton CBE

He will explain the history of the scientific discoveries that led to understanding the facts of the current climate change, the first major one since 10,000 years ago when the ice melted. He will describe some of the consequential effects on civilisation and some of the ways in which humanity can act to reduce the risks and minimise these consequences.



“The Legendary Leith Smacks”

Thursday 26th November 7.30pm

Dr Eric Graham,

Scottish & Maritime Historian,

Author and Researcher.

Prior to the completion of the railway link between Edinburgh and London in 1850 taking passage on a Leith smack was considered the most convenient and comfortable mode of transport for the discerning gentleman and lady. The custom built single masted smacks were designed for speed and seaworthiness and could make the journey between the capitals in 45 hours in the right conditions. Rival companies operated this passenger service out of Leith on a regular basis and their captains and boats were local celebrities and well known to the likes of Sir Walter Scott.

SUMMER BIRD REPORT

June-August 2015



Corstorphine Hill is home to around 40 species of breeding birds, many of which depend upon the rich ancient woodland and associated habitats of gorse and scrub. There are hole-nesters such as Tawny Owl, Stock Dove, Jackdaw, Green Woodpecker, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Nuthatch and Treecreeper, while birds of the fringes include Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Whitethroat, Blackcap, Linnet, Bullfinch and Long-tailed Tit. When you add to this list species such as Buzzard, Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Mistle Thrush and Jay, it is a quite extraordinary variety to find within the limits of a major city.

Unusual summer visitors to the Hill included a **Pied Flycatcher** at the very end of May, and in mid-July a local irruption of **Crossbills**, **Siskins** and **Redpolls** – as these newly fledged finch families foraged further afield. A splendid **Red-backed Shrike** appeared in the gorse on 24th August, probably a Scandinavian migrant blown off course by the strong easterly drift the preceding day. There were further signs of migration on 29th August, with a very late group of **Swifts** feeding in the lee of the ridge, and **Meadow Pipits** navigating south over the Hill. Passing birds during the period included **Sand Martin**, **Grey Wagtail**, **Fulmar**, **Cormorant**, **Oystercatcher** and **Curlew**.

In June 48 species were recorded, 45 in July and 42 in August. The grand total for the Hill now stands at 92 species.

For latest sightings see: <http://chilloutdoors.tumblr.com>

Ian Moore

OTHER NEWS.....

We had a very enjoyable woodland experience in June, with performers from Rowanbank Environmental Education, taking over 100 children and adults on a walk over the hill and into the walled garden.

There were all kinds of dressed up characters, storytellers, jugglers and stilt walkers. This was thoroughly enjoyed by the children (and I suspect by the adults too). A fun way to learn about the woodland and make children aware that we must look after our trees and woods. It's something we might do again in the future!

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



City of Edinburgh Council Natural Heritage Service Sept. Report

As I write, the sun is shining, it's 18 degrees and it's officially Autumn! The summer that never really got going eventually does, just a little too late!

Edinburgh's Living Landscape project and associated relaxed grass cutting regime on the western flanks of Corstorphine Hill has been very well received. The slightly more rugged look with maintained paths is really much more in keeping with the site; I wonder why we didn't do it sooner! The grass has now been topped, possibly another topping before the year is out with some supplementary seeding next season.

As mentioned in the last newsletter some tree works were undertaken, surveying for Dutch Elm Disease continues and we now have confirmed evidence that Ash Dieback is infecting trees on the Hill. We will be following the Forestry Commission Scotland guidance on Chalara which at present does not require any biological controls or restrictions on the site. In fact as the disease is windblown the Forestry Commission Scotland is not advising the removal of infected trees. They do say though that if an infected tree is felled that it should be burnt. Our Forestry Service are also discussing possible steps to take to slow down the build up of inoculum (in [forest pathology](#), any part of a [pathogen](#) that can cause [infection](#) of a [host](#)) on site by coppicing the infected trees and burning the felled timber.

Small areas where Himalayan balsam is completely dominant have been treated with herbicide. This approach has been successful and we will aim to target such dominant areas this way from now on. Hand pulling will continue where more diversity is apparent. Salmonberry controls have now begun at the end of the nesting season and will continue through the winter period. Re growth in areas cleared of salmonberry will also be treated with herbicide in the new season.

We have been successful in a bid for additional funding latterly and as such will look to mechanically scrape all formal path surfaces, clear and repair existing drainage infrastructure, install more access infrastructure and new cycle stands at the walled garden. This will be done after leaf fall.

Centralised services from Parks and Greenspace are to descend on Corstorphine Hill on the 28th of October. Our main focus will be improvements to infrastructure, salmonberry controls and some juvenile woodland management. Please do say hello if you see us!

As always, comments, wildlife sightings and suggestions are most welcome. Please get in touch.

David Kyles naturalheritageservice@edinburgh.gov.uk or phone 0131 529 2401.

Contact naturalheritageservice@edinburgh.gov.uk or phone 0131 529 2401.

City of Edinburgh Council Natural Heritage Service
Hermitage of Braid69a Braid Road, Edinburgh EH10 6JF 0131 529 2401
naturalheritageservice@edinburgh.gov.uk

