

Friends of Corstorphine Hill

NEWSLETTER No. 27

September 2006

Editor: Les Hutcheon Tel 334 3832

Editorial

With this edition we bring you updates of the summer activities such as what has been happening on the hill and in the walled garden. We were represented at the very successful biyearly Corstorphine Fair and the summer guided walks programme has been well supported along with the popular activity of opening the tower. Equally important, it brings news of the winter talks programme.

Volunteers are needed for the rota to open and close the garden gate mornings and evenings. Perhaps a dog walker who is passing at these times anyway would care to help. If so contact Os Wallace on 334 3343.

Winter Talks Programme 2006-2007

All the talks are free and have all been arranged to take place at 7.30 pm in lecture theatre B at Queen Margaret College.

Tuesday October 3rd 2006

COMPOSTING by Thomas Turnbull
Home Composting Advisor

Thursday November 23rd 2006.

The ROLE of the WILDLIFE CRIME OFFICE
by PC Charles Everitt

Tuesday February 20th 2007.

Topic still to be announced.
As with speaker.

Thursday March 15th 2007.

BUTTERFLIES by Richard Buckland

Cecilia McPherson

Harbinger of Hints Hearsay and History of the Hill

In the last Newsletter we asked for information towards publishing a history of Corstorphine Hill. I'd like to thank everyone who has responded – lots of new and valuable information has poured in, and the amazing thing is that there's been no duplication – everyone has a different story to tell.

Research also continues in the local archives, and I cannot begin adequately to thank Frances MacRae, archivist at the Dower House, for her wide-ranging local knowledge and her unfailing help, advice and enthusiasm. We are so lucky to have such an extensive local archive collection, freely available for research.

Soon I shall be in a position to start writing the history, and pulling the assorted information together. What well-known Scots poet acted as a courier between two star-crossed lovers? Who was the phantom horseman on the Hill? Who was described as 'the loneliest Corporation employee in Edinburgh'? And why did Daisy cause consternation when she went in search of biscuits? We're working on bringing you the answers, and on producing a booklet we hope you'll want to buy and read.

And of course, if you have information on the history of the Hill, we'd still like to hear from you. I'm particularly interested in any use of the Hill



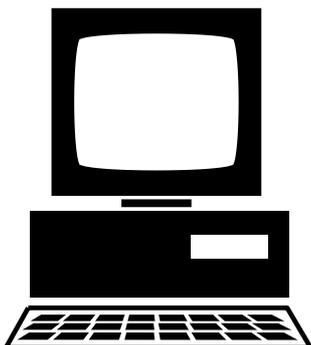
during the two world wars - for telecommunications, observation or military training, for example – and in the people who have lived, farmed or worked on the Hill over the centuries. I can be contacted at The Coach House, 71 Clermiston Road, EH12 6UY.

Alison MacKintosh

Keeping up to Date

We try to keep you up to date through the newsletter but keep an eye on notice boards round the hill for latest events as well as our website www.corstorphinehill.org.uk.

Talking of newsletters, we are looking for volunteer deliverers in the Craigmillar, Roseburn and Gogarloch areas to deliver a few newsletters roughly three times a year. Contact Martin Craven on 334 1247.



ZOO'S PROPOSED ENCROACHMENT ON CORSTORPHINE HILL

It is the policy of your committee that under no circumstances will the area designated a local nature reserve be sold off or otherwise reduced to make room for any type of development.

Our reasoning is that the hill area is a green belt and local conservation site and any intrusion on this will significantly reduce the access for the local community and the habitats of indigenous wildlife.

The management plan for Edinburgh Zoo involves the selling off of approximately 13 acres of land with zoning permission for around 100 houses to be built parallel to Kaimes Road.

To offset this loss of this land, which Edinburgh Zoo admit could be used for enclosures and Zoo buildings, they are applying to the council for approximately 8 acres of Corstorphine Hill Local Nature Reserve land at the eastern boundary of the Zoo, south of the Rest and be thankful. According to the current plans the land would be used for a roadway and animal enclosures, and therefore it would be inaccessible to members of the public using the Hill.

It is the opinion of the committee that this particular area of the hill, with its wide views south over Edinburgh and the Pentlands, would be a major loss to the members and general public who regularly walk the area.

We have just done a major badger survey and have discovered that badgers, as well as many other animal species, frequently use this area.

The draft Woodland Management Plan clearly shows several pathways that are currently in use, and improvement of the area as part of the nature reserve is ongoing.

As you probably know there is now residential building work at the foot of Kaimes Road and planning permission has been given for the building of further flats at Pinkhill. We feel that these two new developments will cause a significant increase in congestion on Corstorphine Road, and that the addition of 100 new houses with further access to Corstorphine Road would make the congestion completely unmanageable.

Because of this we have submitted a letter of objection to the Council City and Local planning department as this is the best action we feel we can take at this time. Should the proposals go to the planning permission request stage we plan to call a public meeting to inform and canvass the opinions of our membership and the local community.

Secretary

Corstorphine Walled Garden Wetland Project

The bulk of the work on this project was completed in November 2005, at which stage the rectangular boardwalk was completed, as was the arched bridge. The liner was fitted within this enclosed area and many tons of soil were barrowed into this area. Access paths were built to allow the public to reach the area, and a native hedge was planted so that in time the area will become separated to a degree from the rest of the walled garden. From this point, it was necessary to allow the soil within the boardwalk to become saturated with rainwater, and to wait for spring, which was the ideal time to plant the wetland plugs.

In April 2006, the wildflower plugs were planted and in July and August of this year, the handrails to the bridge were completed and specimen trees (birch and willow) added at each corner of the bridge. The plants that were put in at the site are listed below.

The garden now needs time for the plants to become established, and it is expected that the plants will begin to look mature in a couple of years.

Plant list:

RAGGED ROBIN	DEVIL'S-BIT SCABIOUS
WATER AVENS	BUGLE
MEADOWSWEET	FRITILLARY
MARSH WOUNDWORT	YELLOW IRIS
PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE	YELLOW LOOSESTRIFE

Andy Ross, Community Project Officer B.T.C.V. Scotland

In the Garden

This summer has been exceptionally dry and very little planting has been done because of the hard clay soil. Despite that the established plants that like dry conditions have put on a great show. The garden has been kept tidy by our volunteers who come on Tuesday and Thursday as well as the Saturday girls. The judges for the Edinburgh Gardens Competition were very impressed. The judging for "Scotland in Bloom" will take place later on. We hope that they will be equally impressed.

Earlier on in the year we built some new woodchip pathways and some drains. The screen around the utility area is finished and climbers will be put against it.

Of the plants in the wetland Ragged Robin, Loosestrife and Marsh Woundwort are flowering. The grass meadow next to the wetland is now growing and should provide another seating area. A good place to stop, look at the wetland and ponder.

Alan White

Friends of Corstorphine Hill

Registered as a charity No. SCO28842

Chairman: Mr E Price, 25 Corstorphine Hill Avenue Edinburgh EH12 6LF. Tel 0131 539 1088

Secretary: Mr A Hayes, 2F2 Lochrin Terrace Edinburgh EH3 9QL. Tel 0131 466 5839

Website: www.corstorphinehill.org.uk