



Friends of Corstorphine Hill

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Zoo Plans Update

At the meeting between the Corstorphine Community Council and the Director of the Zoo, Mr. Windmill, more facts emerged about the Zoo's plans.

As regards the housing between the western edge of the Zoo and Kaimies Road, this is currently in the Local Plan, which the Council is shortly to approve or amend. So it is up to the opponents of the proposal to persuade the Council or the Public Enquiry which will be held into the Local Plan to delete this item. The proposals include a new access from Corstorphine Road opposite the Forestry building and about 100 houses on about 16 acres being built in 2010.

The Zoo's proposals for gaining land to the East of the Zoo from the open part of the Corstorphine Hill Park are not in the Local Plan and will be a separate issue. The Zoo is planning one sole entrance near the top of the car park (roughly beside the polar bears), with no entrance from Corstorphine Road and perhaps a shuttle bus from the main road to the new entrance for bus passengers and visitors on foot. Because the regulations now apparently do not allow new developments with more than a 1 in 12 slope, the Zoo claims that it must abandon its existing pedestrian route up the hill and create a less steep and more zig-zag footway from the new entrance up the hill. To accommodate this, they have asked the Council to lease to them a 4-acre site – part of the open ground adjoining the East side of the Zoo and above the BUPA hospital. This would be incorporated in the Zoo and fenced off from the public part of the Hill.

In return, the Zoo is offering the Council to give two narrow strips of their land at its northern edge adjoining the public footpath running west from Rest and Be Thankful, adding up to 4 acres. These strips would be added to the public part of the Hill. The Zoo is also offering to fund and take part in some work to "improve" the rest of the open space from Corstorphine Road (opposite Balgreen Road) up to Rest and Be Thankful to landscape, create a tidier environment, remove some undesirable plants etc. and say they will consult with the Council and the Friends of Corstorphine Hill about this.

The Friends will have to examine all these proposals carefully, once details are available. At first sight, the ground the Zoo is offering is less useful than the land they would gain, and tampering with the natural landscape of the open space with its gorse and rough paths will not appeal to many people who walk there. The Friends will keep you informed of developments and seek the comments of members and of the general public.

Donald Gorrie

About to be History!

The promised history of Corstorphine Hill is now in production and making good progress towards our planned publication date later this year.

We're hoping that it'll be just what you're looking for as a Christmas stocking-filler.

It is the work of a local designer and an editorial consultant who knows the hill well; it'll be a full-colour 48-page book deserving a place on your shelves.

The history begins 5,000 years ago and local characters include an early landscape gardener and a pioneering woman doctor. Love stories, ghost stories, festivities, war, murder, everyday life above and below stairs – it's all there and we hope you'll buy and enjoy it.

We're keeping the price ridiculously low – it's a snip at £5.

The title is easily remembered – it's **Corstorphine Hill**. The subtitle comes from a comment by a 19th century travel writer: *The finest views the eye can feast on* – which is still true today.

You'll be able to obtain a copy through the Friends and there will be information posted on the web site as soon as it becomes available at www.corstorphinehill.org.uk

Corstorphine Hill – *The finest views the eye can feast on* will be published soon by the Friends of Corstorphine Hill, price £5.

Alison MacKintosh

Meanwhile Out On the Hill

Follow up work has been carried out on the trees planted as part of the woodland management plan to ensure that they are not out competed by other vegetation. Also the invasive *rubus* has been cut back.

Fencing has been tidied up particularly opposite the hotel in Clermiston Road.

New signs are being designed for all the entrances to the reserve and will appear on new notice boards, which are to be erected in due course.

New Membership Cards

As previously mentioned we are introducing membership cards. Attached to this newsletter you will find a card by way of getting the system up and running. From next year you will receive your card only when you rejoin and pay your subscription.
Membership Secretary

Winter Talks Programme 2007-2008

The Friends' talks programme is shown below so please make a note in your diary of the dates and the venue before you forget.

Monday 22nd October 2007 Plantlife Project by Suzanne Cooper

Suzanne Cooper of Plantlife Scotland will talk about the work of this UK charity, which seeks to conserve and record plantlife, particularly monitoring rare and declining species, but also common well known plants. Plantlife wish to involve everyone interested in wildlife to help in recording the decline or increase in wild plants to inform conservation measures. People who walk Nature Reserves such as Corstorphine Hill can help by reporting their observations to Plantlife.

Tuesday 6th November 2007 Pentlands Regional Park by Susan Falconer

Susan Falconer, senior Ranger for Pentland Hills Regional Park, will talk about the Park, the work of the Rangers, and the work of voluntary rangers (similar to FOCH).

Monday 4th February 2008 Wildlife Crime Officer by P C Charles Everitt

Charles Everitt gave us an excellent talk last year concerning his role and the type of cases he handles. An update promises to be most interesting.

Tuesday 11th March 2008 RSPB in Scotland by Aileen Fox

Please note that the venue for the talks has changed to the **Best Western Capitol Hotel Clermiston Road.** As usual the talks are free and start at **7.30 pm.**

We are sorry to no longer have the use of the facilities at Queen Margaret University. We are grateful for all the help we received from Queen Margaret University and like to think that their presence in the community was of mutual benefit. Certainly the Friends always enjoyed showing the Italian students during their summer visit, round the hill and up the Tower from where they could see the airport from whence they were to depart from their Scottish experience. The University has developed from modest beginnings through several stages to reach its present status. We wish them all the best for the future in their new premises.

We look forward to enjoying an equally good relationship with the hotel.

For further information regarding the talks please contact either Cecilia McPherson 334 4211 or Gordon Swann 334 4769.

In the garden

During the summer some plants put on a good show especially the roses and buddleia. Some trees are growing which in time will give a woodland effect.

The garden was judged for the Keep Edinburgh Growing competition and we are waiting for the result.

One of our occasional visitors was moved by the atmosphere he experienced in the garden to put his thoughts into verse.

Alan White

The Woodland Garden By Robert Watson MA BD

On Corstorphine Hill in Edinburgh fair,
Stands an old walled garden, tended with care.
Its pathways, flowers, plants and shrubs, all lovingly designed,
A more homely layout it would be hard to find.

Lavender, rosemary and mint
Bunched together, to the sensory buds give more than a hint.
The oak tree saplings lie bedded as one,
All with a promise of great things to come.
Quercus rubra, Scottish-bred,
With *Ilex Aquifolium*, its holly cousin, from far Zante shed.

The carved wooden seat does Freddy Fox and Berty Badger proud,
But real ones to enter the garden are not allowed.
Yet a flash of white tail and flap of ear
Betrayed, alas a bunny was near.

There stand the irises, proud queens in blue,
Their long, wide tunics and enchanting wings of gorgeous hue.
Persona of the rainbow and messenger of the Gods,
In her hands the Herald's staff and pitcher holds.

The wet woodland is adorned with crimson-flowered campion,
But to many its tattered petals are champion
Brightening the dull grasses,
Just like the young men are by the lassies.

Friends of Corstorphine Hill

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