



Friends of Corstorphine Hill

NEWSLETTER No.57



Autumn/Winter 2016 Editor: Fred Davies Tel: 337 9232

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Registered Charity No. SCO 28842

Chairman's Report.

Our Summer Activities have gone well this year, with good weather and attendances. Thanks as ever to Brian Moffat for the annual Wildflower and Trees rambles on the Hill. Thanks also to David Adamson for helping with the Butterflies, Bees and Bugs Hunt in August. David will also be leading the Fungus Foray on Sunday 2nd October starting from Cairnmuir Road car park at 2 pm.

We have had good visitor numbers to the Tower this year in spite of two closures due to high winds and rain. Last Sunday we had 90 visitors! Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th September are Doors Open Days, and we will be open 2-4 pm both days. Many thanks as ever to the band of volunteers who help us open the Tower to visitors. The visitors are very appreciative and it makes us quite a lot of money in donations.

For some time we have been concerned about the state of the Tower building, particularly the stonework and mortar, and the steel internal stairway. At our request the Council are commissioning a survey to estimate the cost of repairs..Once we have this information we can start to apply for Grants to pay for the work. Needless to say, the Council do not have the funds for this.

This is partly due to this year's 'Transformation' involving major re-organisation of the Council Departments to save money due to major reductions in the grant from the Scottish Government. This inevitably means job losses. I have attended several meetings with staff from Parks and Greenspaces to hear how their work, which directly affects us, will change. There is a cut of around 10% in Parks management and maintenance staff, on top of reductions which have already occurred over the last few years. The good news for us is that the Natural Heritage Service, which manages Local nature Reserves such as Corstorphine Hill and Cammo had already undergone a major cut 2 years ago and is relatively little affected this time around. Fortunately for us, David Kyles is still the NHO responsible for Corstorphine, Cammo, and many other places. He hasn't time to be present on the Hill more than once a week, but is very active in promoting conservation work on the Hill by volunteer groups, and in supporting our work and answering questions. We are lucky to have him. David Jamieson has also retained his post as Head of Parks, Greenspaces (and now also Cemeteries), and he has always impressed me with his commitment to our parks, and support for Friends Groups.

Gordon Swann (Chairman)

AUTUMN/WINTER PROGRAMME

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

**CANALS BY NUMBERS – History and
Heritage. Talk by Gemma Wild –
Canal Officer, Scottish Waterways Trust
Thursday 24th November 2016**



Canals are one of Scotland's most important national heritage collections, showcasing amazing engineering feats plus a huge variety of fascinating and important historic buildings and archeological sites.



**ANOTHER 100 SCOTSMAN WALKS.
Talk by author Robin Howie
Thursday 26th January 2017**

Robin Howie's is a very well known name in Scottish hillwalking circles, not least because for over ten years he has written a popular "Walk of the Week" column in "The Scotsman" newspaper every Saturday.'

THE RED SQUIRREL PROJECT'.

Talk by Dr Mel Tonkin. Wednesday 22nd February, 2017.

This is a major project run by the Scottish Wildlife Trust for a number of years with the object of conserving red squirrel populations in Scotland, and also increasing them by re introduction in suitable areas. Dr Mel Tonkin has been director of this project for many years, and a number of other organisations such as RSPB , the Forestry Commission, and Scottish Natural Heritage have joined in, and achieved considerable success in halting the decline of red squirrels in Scotland.



AUTUMN CAN BE an exciting time on Corstorphine Hill, when southward-bound migratory birds stop off to feed, or simply use the hill's distinctive topography for navigational purposes. A dashing **Merlin**,



perhaps disoriented in the early morning mist on 18th August, was the first sign of things to come. Three days later a family party of **Spotted Flycatchers** appeared – the first of five separate sightings up to mid September. There was a **Garden Warbler** on 12th August, while anticyclonic conditions brought an influx of **Willow Warblers** on 3rd September. A splendid **Redstart** was in the gorse on 11th September, and a steady trickle of **Skylarks** and **Meadow Pipits** moved overhead between 10th and 15th, with **Siskin** also on 15th and **Redpoll** four days later. The vanguard of the wintering **Pink-footed Geese** came chattering through at dawn on 17th September, followed by thousands in clan-based skeins of 50-150 taking advantage of a ridge of high pressure on 19th September.

Summer residents began to depart for their African wintering grounds in the usual order, with **Swifts** being the first to go – last seen on the relatively late date of 26th August. The 60-strong **House Martin** flock that built up in the lee of the steep northeast corner of the hill departed on 12th September. A last **Whitethroat** was spotted on 7th September, **Blackcap** and **Swallow** 20th while a resilient **Chiffchaff** was still singing at the time of going to press on 26th September.



Other uncommon local species passing or visiting the hill during the autumn period included **Grey Heron**, **Greylag Goose**, **Oystercatcher**, **Curlew**, **Peregrine**, **Grey Wagtail**, **Hooded Crow**, **Rook** and **Raven**.

A total of 62 bird species were recorded in the autumn period, and the grand total for the hill since 2006 now stands at 97 species. Pictured above: top left, Spotted Flycatcher near The Rest & Be Thankful; lower right, Chiffchaff on the fence bordering the Spire Hospital.

For regular updates of Corstorphine Hill birds and wildlife see <http://chilloutdoors.tumblr.com> - Ian Moore, Committee Member.

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



***City of Edinburgh Council Forestry & Natural Heritage Service Report
to the Committee Meeting in August .***

SITE MANAGEMENT

Regular site inspections made (2 week schedule)

Small tent removed from boundary by hospital (south side) and larger tent found and removed.

Graffiti: - removed from wall at Corstorphine Road entrance
- currently some stone waymarkers have been spray painted, graffiti remover does not work, matt grey spray paint purchased to cover.

Several fire sites cleared including a scorched ash tree on the south side.

Several reports of trees overhanging properties shading out light, perceived dangerous condition, all passed to Trees and Woodlands Officer for assessment.

Green Flag award to the hill- scores were good.

TRANSFORMATION.

Our service review has almost reached a conclusion – I have now relocated to Inverleith, address below. The likelihood is that I will touch base at the Hermitage, have office space at Cammo Estate and will continue to manage Corstorphine Hill LNR.

ACTIVITY.

Corporate group from RBS (approx 30) to tackle salmonberry 23/9/16

“ “ through Employee Volunteering (50+) 28/9/16

Nature Play programme occurring Sept-Oct weekly, run jointly by Rannoch Centre & Green Team.

2 x new orientation panels on order for Hillpark & Queensferry Road entrances.

Investigating large capacity bins with outer pictorial facade such as those seen in other Edinburgh parks e.g. Meadows, Princess Street Gardens

WORK

Frame with timber edging, underneath all picnic seating over the hill and infill for ease of maintenance. Repair damaged cycling chicanes. Replace damaged Perspex on display case at Kaimes/Cairnmuir. Cut back all overhanging/encroaching path edge vegetation along zoo boundary by the Rest & Be Thankful.

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