

Friends of Corstorphine Hill

NEWSLETTER No.59



Summer 2017 Editor: Fred Davies Tel: 337 9232

www.corstorphinehill.org.uk

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

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

So far this year the weather has been kind to our events. The Tower opened for the first time this year on 7th May, and so far we have had good weather and good numbers of visitors. This year money collected will go towards the Tower Restoration Fund, and we are starting to apply for grant aid to help this fund.

Good numbers of visitors attended Ian Moore's Birdwatching Walk and Brian Moffat's Wildflower Walk both in May and we have further events on the Hill from now until October.

Now is the season to try to reduce the coverage of invasive species such as Himalayan Balsam and Salmonberry on the Hill. David Kyles of the Natural Heritage Service of CEC is busy organising work parties of volunteers to help in this vital work so if you can spare some time to help out please let us know or contact him direct. Now is also the season for outdoor parties on the Hill, and unfortunately some of these visitors leave piles of litter behind. If you are out on the Hill regularly you can help by carrying a plastic bag and picking up, also reporting to us and/or the Heritage Service. Unfortunately there is no easy way of preventing or punishing this anti social behaviour.

Enjoy the summer on Corstorphine Hill and elsewhere and please visit the Walled Garden, the Tower and join one of our guided walks
Gordon Swan

TOWER OPENING

Saturday 23rd and Sunday 24th September are Edinburgh Doors Open Days, so the Tower will be open and hopefully busy both days. We will need extra helpers so think about volunteering 2-4 pm on one of those days.

SUMMER PROGRAMME



Sunday 23rd July Trees of Corstorphine Hill : Brian Moffat will lead a walk to show the interesting variety of trees to be seen on the Hill. **Meet in the Walled Garden at 2pm**

Sunday 20th August Hunt for small creatures – Bees, Butterflies and other bugs.

This is a family event so bring small hunters, with a small clear plastic screwtop jar and magnifier if you have them.

Meet in the Walled Garden at 2 pm.



Sunday 1st October Family Fungus Foray led by David Adamson : find and identify these hidden occupants of the Hill which are visible mainly in the autumn. **Meet at Kaimes Road car park at 2 pm.**

Garden Report..

The general direction of development continues along the same lines that I detailed last March. The greater part of the garden is of a 'woodland' nature and we are trying to keep a part of the north east section relatively open, to benefit from the afternoon sun. To that end, the Ranger's team felled the large Ash near the north wall, and the Red Oak close by. The Ranger returned with a team of volunteers last week to remove the oak stump and to work on improving the paths. A Broom and the Elaeagnus planted 'in the beginning' – presumably around 2003 – died and have been removed. The fernery in the south east corner goes from strength to strength and is looking good.

To screen the north path and soften the wall line, we've planted shrubs from the gate bed up to the top hut. These include Escallonias, 3 Hamamelis, a Viburnum Bodnantense 'Dawn' and a weeping willow-leaved pear. We've put 4 new azaleas in what used to be called the Tower bed at the south of the garden, and there will be summer planting in the bed in front of Eddie Price's bench and a new bed beside the big Ash stump, which was a tangle of Euphorbia and Kerria. An 'Inverleith' Jasmine and a Hydrangea petiolaris have been bought to put near the gate, and by the lower picnic bench. The boardwalk continues to tantalise by being more dry than wet, but we've put in new Irises, and a variety of oddments to try and increase interest. One success has been a yellow flowered Mimulus which has taken well, to the north of the bridge, so we've put a blue flowered one near it.

As ever, maintenance keeps us out of mischief, as does the fact that the whole team is a year older and frailer, and would dearly like some new blood.

Hugh Edwards

BIRD REPORT----



There are mixed fortunes to report for the breeding birds of Corstorphine Hill. On the plus side, above-average numbers of warblers made the return migration from Africa, and Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, Blackcap and Whitethroat territories are up by about 50% on 2016. Many of the resident species are also thriving – perhaps most notably Great Spotted Woodpecker, with 6 successful pairs on the south side of the Hill alone. Locally scarce species such as Treecreeper, Long-tailed Tit, Goldcrest, Mistle Thrush, Jay and Stock Dove have also prospered, and by the end of May had fledged their first broods; with Tawny Owl, Sparrowhawk and Buzzard lagging just a few weeks behind. Sadly, however, this year there are no breeding Green Woodpeckers or Linnets – but it is hoped these heathland birds will recolonize in due course. Notwithstanding, the Hill remains a vital and precious ‘factory’ for Edinburgh’s avifauna, with some 1,000 pairs of 45 species breeding on or in close proximity to the LNR. Other sightings of note since the last newsletter include Cormorant, Grey Heron, Mallard, Greylag Goose, Oystercatcher, Peregrine, Raven, Siskin, Redpoll and Crossbill. Of wider wildlife interest, Roe Deer are breeding on the Hill, Comma butterflies can be seen in sunny glades, and Natterer’s bats feed at dusk along woody rides.

For photographic bird & wildlife updates see <http://chilloutdoors.tumblr.com> or click through from the ‘web links’ page of the FoCH website. Ian Moore.

Special Interest.....

Dr Brian Moffat our resident botanist is also an archaeologist and Director of excavations at Soutra Aisle, the remains of a Medieval Monastery and Hospital on Soutra Hill, The annual Open days on the Site are 26th, 27th and 28th August at 2 pm each day . Soutra Aisle is just off the A68 at Soutra Hill, on the right about ½ mile up the B 6368 to Gilston. There is a fascinating story to hear about the Monastery and its activities more than 500 years ago.



City of Edinburgh Council Forestry & Natural Heritage Service Report to the Committee Meeting

Anti-social behaviour over the Easter Holidays on Corstorphine Hill LNR and other similar sites within the Edinburgh area was rife. Drinking debris and fire lighting was hugely problematic. The removal of household wheelie bins from properties dragging them to parkland or woodland locations and then torching them has become a popular activity. Again, evidence of motorised vehicle use has been evident of late. If anyone does encounter this type of activity, please call Police Scotland on 101 and report it or let Forestry and Natural Heritage know (0131 529 2401) and we can report. On the back of this I invited the local community Police Team for the area for a site visit where hotspot locations were shown, current issues highlighted and we also enjoyed a tour of the Barnton Quarry Restoration Project!

Another topical issue on site at present is the conduct of some professional dog walkers. People who commercially walk dogs are encouraged to sign up to a Council scheme aimed at achieving a certain standard of behaviour – see http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20178/park_management_and_rules/252/professional_dog_walkers. As such a Code of Conduct must be adhered to. A particularly pertinent issue is how dogs are loaded and unloaded from vehicles at the main parking provision areas at the site. The Code of Conduct states, *“Take extra care when arriving and leaving parks and greenspace to minimise issues for other users. All dogs should be walked away from and returned to the vehicle on a lead”*. This requirement is not being followed by some and some near misses and dogs being hit by vehicles has happened. Please note any instances and contact/vehicle information and inform me (contact details below) to help address the situation.

Our Dutch Elm Disease sanitisation programme has continued. Some safety tree felling has occurred where deadwood was overhanging paths. Our seasonal path edge vegetation cutting schedule has begun. Salmonberry re-growth has been chemically treated, Himalayan balsam has been selectively chemically treated and pulled with assistance from Earth Calling and some local school and community groups. There have been a number of corporate volunteer groups (Royal London, Standard life) assisting with certain tasks within the walled garden and out on the hill: painting, path refurbishment, installation of hard standing under seating, tree stump removal.

David Kyles naturalheritageservice@edinburgh.gov.uk

City of Edinburgh Council Forestry & Natural Heritage Service

Inverleith Farm House, Inverleith Park, 5 Arboretum Palce, Edinburgh EH3 5NY

Tel: 0131 311 7078