



Friends of Corstorphine Hill

Newsletter No 10, November 2001

Walled Garden - Grub up

For half a century, the walled garden that once belonged to Hillwood House lay neglected. The vegetation had grown to an impenetrable mass. The wall had crumbled in places, pushed sideways by trees and prised apart by the encompassing ivy. It was not typical of the rest of the hill, favouring species which benefited from the previous cultivation and it certainly was not accessible.

The project taken on by the *Friends* was to create a pleasant environment with educational potential that would be a community garden. With support from various sources, particularly Councillor Paul Edie and the Council, as well as help from several sponsors, the project got underway. And so it was that, under the charismatic leadership of Big Eddie, the *Friends* were to boldly go into the Walled Garden.

Throughout the summer, the buzz of a chain saw or the low growl of a JCB engine could be heard. Even when there was no noise, passers-by could observe the wisps of smoke from Win's fires which bore witness to the activities of volunteers in their efforts to prepare the area for planting.

A huge effort was made to have the garden ready for the filming of the Beechgrove Garden television programme. In their words, Beechgrove provided the services of a designer and a little money. Of course they did much more. They acted as a catalyst to really get things moving. The team was terrific. Researchers and presenters alike were always willing to quietly offer advice or answer any questions about gardening problems. What is more, whether they had those well-known multi-coloured fingernails or they were unpainted, all of them were prepared to get earth under their nails by getting stuck in.

At the first of our winter evening meetings, we reviewed the project. We watched again the parts of the Beechgrove programme relevant to the garden and, in addition, Wee Eddie showed a video record of the development from the early days of clearing the site to the recent planting. Slides and photographs also served as reminders of the dramatic changes in the area. Big Eddie explained our ambitions for the future.

Phase one ended with an Open Day on the last Saturday of October. One of our sponsors, Barclays, provided refreshments for volunteers and visitors. Several members of staff from Barclays along with a number of other volunteers turned out to grub up the more persistent weeds and help plant more suitable ones till it was "grub up" time.

Regular volunteers have developed a great camaraderie as well as finding satisfaction through being part of the project. If you have missed out on the fun during the first stage, do not worry because there will be plenty to get involved with during phase two and beyond. There will be planting, cataloguing and providing information about plants, as well as general maintenance. We aim to open the garden through each day and close it at night. Perhaps you could take part in a rota for that duty? It may be that you regularly pass that way in the morning or evening and could open or close the gate. Get in touch and become part of the community of the garden.

The garden already has 116 species, not counting those that are growing there by themselves, and we aim to increase the biodiversity even more with mainly native species of wild plants. In doing so, we look forward to receiving more support and grub for the grubber uppers.

***Lesbeardus corstorphinense* (Les Hutcheon)**

Talks

A programme of talks arranged for the Winter is underway. All take place at 7.30 p.m. in Queen Margaret University College Lecture Theatre B.

Thursday 22 November 2001

So what is a Rhododendron?

Dr David Chamberlain (formerly of the Royal Botanic Garden).

Dr Chamberlain will relate the plants considered a weed on Corstorphine Hill to the colourful flowering plants that decorate many gardens. It is an interesting story and also tells why classification matters. Pictures taken while collecting rhododendrons in the wild during some 30 years of study will illustrate the talk.

Thursday 17 January 2002

Fossils from around Edinburgh

Rev Peter Brand (formerly of the British Geological Survey).

Edinburgh has an interesting and complex geology with a great variety of rocks and a great variety of fossils in them. This talk by a local expert palaeontologist will be illustrated with photographs and specimens of fossils, including some from Corstorphine Hill.

Thursday 21 February 2002

Archaeology in Edinburgh

Dr Graham Ritchie (formerly of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland).

Many prehistoric and early historic archaeological remains have been discovered within what is now the City of Edinburgh, from Bronze Age burials to a Roman fort at Cramond. Medieval and more recent remains have also been discovered in the course of recent excavations. Focusing on the area of Corstorphine Hill, early maps, aerial photographs and other resources of the National Monuments Record of Scotland will be explored.

Thursday 21 March 2002

Earthquakes detected from Edinburgh

Dr David Booth (British Geological Survey).

From their offices in Edinburgh, seismologists detect earthquakes, explosions and seismic events throughout the world. Parts of Scotland are amongst the most seismically active in the UK and small earthquakes have occurred in the Midlothian area. How safe is Corstorphine Hill? Find out at this talk.

Thursday 25 April 2002

AGM and Work of the Botany Group

Photographs, paintings, new plant lists and a new leaflet - some of the results of the activities of the *Friends'* Botany Group - will be on show. For further information about any of the talks, contact **David McAdam**. Telephone 539 1060.

Corstorphine Fair 2002

Next year's Corstorphine Fair will take place on Saturday the 1st of June and the *Friends* will again have a stall. Last year's combination of plant sale and information point was very well supported and we hope to do even better next time. So, although a bit late in the season, if you have any surplus plants, please either heel them in in a spare corner or pot them up to keep for the Fair. If you don't have space or pots, but would like to be involved now or on the day of the Fair, please contact **Margie Dobson** on 466 0216.

The Tower

The *Friends* will be opening the Tower as part of the Fair's Open Doors project in addition to our Summer Sunday openings. If you can help with stewarding at the Tower (shifts are no longer than two hours and, if we have sufficient volunteers, may be less), please contact **Willma Mullen** on 312 1385.

Newsletter Delivery

Very many thanks indeed to all those who have been helping with newsletter delivery. If you volunteered but have not yet been given a regular run, but please don't think you have been forgotten. Adjustments to the delivery lists are still being made and we may well be calling on your services.

There are a few areas comprising up to half a dozen members who currently receive their newsletters by post, and it would save on costs if these could be sent to one address for distribution.

If you can help with any of these areas -

Boswall	Coltbridge
Craigievar	Fountainbridge
Haymarket	Leith
Marchmont	Moat
Sciennes/Grange	Shandon
Stockbridge Colonies	Trinity
West Pilton	

please phone **Margie** on 466 0216.

Hogmanay Fireworks

The City of Edinburgh Council has given permission for a three-minute display of fireworks on the Hill at Hogmanay again this year.

Friends of Ravelston Park and Woods

We now have a neighbouring Friends group at Ravelston. You can contact them via Tina Woolnough at Blackhall Nursery, Ravelston Park Pavilion, Craigcrook Road. Tel 337 3486.

Friends of Corstorphine Hill

Registered as a charity No SCO28842.

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