

Friends of Corstorphine Hill

NEWSLETTER

September 2005, Editor: Les Hutcheon, Tel: 0131 334 3832

Editorial

This has been a productive summer for the Friends particularly in the Walled Garden where good progress has been made with two projects. The garden is now looking quite mature and the team of volunteers has kept it looking tidy. There are plenty of ideas as to how it can be developed further. Talking of volunteers we are always looking for help on many fronts from gardening to opening the tower or making use of your talents and just a little of your time, in many other ways to make your contribution. It really does enhance one's enjoyment when walking on the Hill to feel part of the group that has an affinity for the nature reserve. Sadly we have to report the sudden death of our Secretary Margaret Macdonald. More news of activities on the Hill and the winter talks programme are all reported in more detail in this Newsletter. ●

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OBITUARY

Margaret Macdonald

By EDDIE PRICE (Chairman)

It is with great sadness that I have to announce the sad loss of our friend Margaret Macdonald. Margaret passed away just a few weeks ago with complications after a heart attack. She is a sad loss to our committee because it was her expertise that produced the educational pack now in possession of all primary schools in the area. Her voice and views at committee meetings will be sadly missed. As indeed was her contribution to and on behalf of the community in general, which was second to none. ●

Friends of Corstorphine Hill

Registered as a charity No. SCO28842

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Sculpture in the Walled Garden - 'Foxed by the Stones'

ALISTER HAYES describes the inspiration behind the new sculptures in the Walled Garden

A day or so after installing the final stones in the walled garden I took a walk to see how they were holding up on their own (sculptures start to feel a bit like your children if you spend enough time on them), to find that in the interim a fox or some other small creature had wandered across the large rose bed piece and produced the most direct bit of art criticism I have ever seen. Wiping it off with a small leaf, I reflected that I have never really been involved in a project so much in the public domain as this one. The inevitable result is that some people will have the same reaction to the work as the fox did, although perhaps without following it through. I hope I can take this opportunity to explain myself, and perhaps avoid having to search for a bigger leaf.



I was approached by F.o.C.H. initially to produce some ideas for a sculpture to put in the walled garden. After toying briefly with some truly outlandish ideas I suggested some stone tablets, positioned at various points throughout the garden with something relevant carved into them in low relief. This idea seemed to meet with general approval so we started applying for a grant to make it happen. After two attempts "Awards for All" lottery grants for local groups came forward with the money and we were ready for the off.

I began by spending some time up in the garden photographing it so I could fix an idea of the layout in my head and have some material to refer to through the design process. I then began to sketch some rough ideas in to my sketchbook and sift through the material and information supplied by very helpful members of the committee. I attended a talk in the Dovecot by a professional storyteller on the history of the area and started trying to figure out what to put on these stones.

While I was doing all this I was also working full time at a deli in town so my initial work was all done in the evenings and weekends. I began attending night classes at the Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop, a charity based in Newhaven that runs studios and a workshop space. I hadn't really carved stone since I had been at college so I needed to brush up on my skills a little. Once I had completed the courses I found a stone supplier and with Eddie Price's help shifted a pallet of various sized blocks down to the workshop. The carving of the final pieces took about a month altogether. Although my ideas evolved a little during the carving process I always tried to keep in my head a rough image of all the finished works and where I was going to place them. I ended up making 9 pieces, each designed for a specific area of the garden. Finally, I enlisted the help of Eddie, Les and my dad to shift them up the hill and set them into concrete foundations.

I think that overall the project has been a success. The sculptures are not intrusive and don't make the garden look like a graveyard. As markers for different areas of the garden they are easy to understand, but at the same time still slightly abstract and open to interpretation. As time goes on they should become even more in tune with their surroundings, picking up different colours as they weather and the plants grow up around them. I had a lot of fun during this project and learned a great deal. I would like to thank F.o.C.H. for giving me this opportunity, I hope that everyone who comes to the garden enjoys the pieces, and if anyone is tempted to copy the fox I can only hope that they choose to express themselves in some other way. ●

Corstorphine Hill Woodland: Management Works Update

By JANE BILOUS (Trees & Woodlands Officer, City of Edinburgh Council)

Now we are reaching the end of summer and the bird nesting season, the woodland management works can continue.

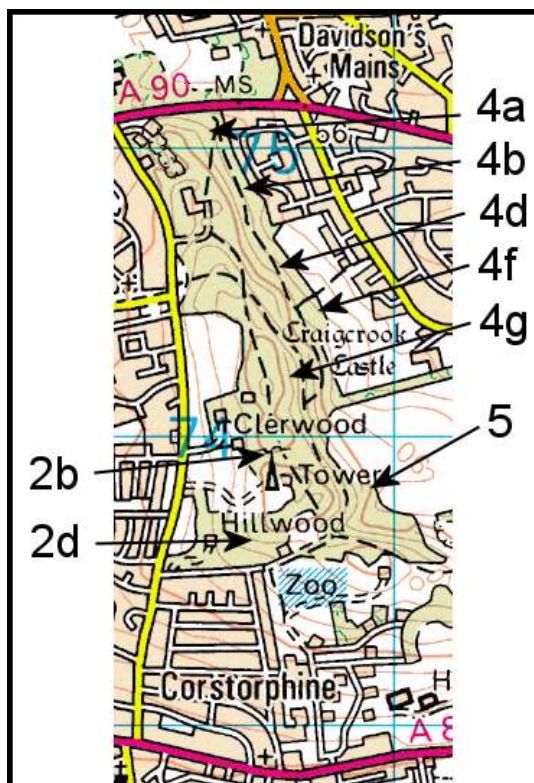
An extensive survey of the trees was undertaken last winter. Pathside trees were surveyed throughout the site. Trees that were found to possess significant cavities and/or decay and considered to be hazardous were identified. These trees have the potential to drop limbs or fall in strong winds and cause damage to paths. Users of Corstorphine Hill may have noticed some of these trees marked with white crosses.

The Woodland Management Plan identified areas for selective felling in order to create gaps in the woodland canopy to plant native broadleaved trees. The aim is to enhance biodiversity by altering the species balance from a currently sycamore dominated woodland to a more native species composition. Sycamore and some other trees in poor condition have been selected and marked for removal in the locations identified in the management plan: in woodland compartments 4a, 4b, 4d, 4f and 4g, on the eastern side of the hill.

It is intended to thin trees throughout compartments 4 & 5 this winter, where the canopy is dense and the trees are closely spaced. This will release selected individuals from competition for resources, encouraging trees to increase in girth and improve in stability.

Selective felling and selective thinning in compartments 4 and 5 on the eastern side of the hill and the removal of hazardous trees throughout the site will commence around mid October. The tree works are likely to continue for 3 months given the extent of the site and the works.

The users of Corstorphine Hill may experience some disruption during the winter months. Some path routes may be closed in the vicinity of tree works for health & safety reasons. The worsening of path conditions can be expected with the use of machinery and the extraction of timber, especially in wet weather. This however will be rectified with the upgrading of existing paths and the construction of new paths in the eastern section of the Hill. Path works will begin in the new year, once the forestry works have been completed.



Some scrub was removed in woodland compartments 2b & 2d in the south west of Corstorphine Hill, in the area between the Walled garden and the Mast. Elder scrub has been removed from compartments 4b and 4d in the east of the site. This has created open ground for planting of native broadleaves. The removal of salmonberry (*Rubus spp.*) will occur at the same time as the tree removal in the east of the site.

The cooperation of the Friends of Corstorphine Hill will be appreciated during the works, in following path diversions and tolerating temporary difficult conditions underfoot. Signage and notices will be displayed on site when the works are underway. ●

Growth in the Garden

ALAN WHITE gives an update on progress and prizes in the Walled Garden

The summer has been very dry and since there is no water supply in the garden, some plants have thrived and others lost. Since the garden is a microcosm of the hill subject to the same climatic conditions, this just reflects the wild nature of the garden. Seeds of the Poppies and Corn Marigolds which were shed last year have not germinated, but may come up next year as they can remain dormant in the soil for years. Despite the dryness the garden has been looking good with a lot of colour and the grass cut; this has encouraged more visitors this summer. Some plants are being replaced in the sensory part. In the coming months the wet woodland will be planted up with other type of plants such as iris and primulae. To encourage wildlife such as small birds and insects hedges and small walls may be put in on the high part of the garden to create a corridor from north to south.

The garden entered the "Neighbourhood Awards" a noncompetitive scheme run by The Royal Horticultural Society, Britain in Bloom project. The judges were very impressed. The garden also entered the "Keep Edinburgh Growing Garden Competition". Last year we were third in the Community Garden category and thought unlikely to be in the prizes for two years, however, we came Second! At the awards ceremony I did the honours of accepting the prize from the judges and the Lady Provost, which consisted of an 8 litre bag of bird seed, a bird feeder and a book on Wildlife Gardening. An appropriate selection as well as that all important Second prize certificate. ●

'Winter Talks' Programme

The programme of 'Winter Talks' has been arranged by CECILIA MCPHERSON

Topic: **"History of Beechwood House and a Tour of the House"**, by Julie Campbell (Marketing Manager)

Date: Tuesday 25th October, 2005

Venue: Beechwood House, BUPA Murrayfield Hospital Edinburgh, at 7.00pm

Topic: **"The History of Corstorphine and the Trust"**, including a visit to the museum archives rooms, by Frances MacRae (Assistant Archivist).

Date: Thursday 24th November, 2005

Venue: The Dower House, at 7.30pm

Topic: **"The History of Brewing"**, by Les Hutcheon (Retired Brewer)

Date: Tuesday 7th February, 2006

Venue: Queen Margaret University College, at 7.30pm

Topic: **"The Rocky Foundations of Corstorphine Hill"**, by David McAdam (Geologist)

Date: Thursday 2nd March, 2006

Venue: Queen Margaret University College, at 7.30pm

The 'WinterTalks' are free, as usual. Please note that numbers are strictly limited for the visit to Beechwood House and you **must** book your place. For further details please contact Cecilia on tel: 0131 -539 1074. ●