



Friends of Corstorphine Hill

NEWSLETTER No. 40

March 2011

Editor: Les Hutcheon Tel 334 3832

Chairman's Tidings

As we launch into the second decade of the twenty first century we can feel proud that the Friends have continued to contribute to benefit of the Hill making it a valuable asset for those who enjoy walking there or even sledging, given our winter conditions this year. We try to keep you up to date with events through the Newsletter but whilst the seasons progress at the usual rate some situations change rapidly in common with world events. Why not come along to the A G M on 19 th April and hear for yourself the latest developments.

Eddie Price

Annual General Meeting

The AGM will be held on **Tuesday 19th April 2011 at 7.30 pm** at the **Best Western Capital Hotel Clermiston Road**

Agenda

- 1 Apologies
- 2 Approval of the minutes of the 2010 AGM
- 3 Matters arising from the minutes
- 4 Chairman's report
- 5 Treasurer's report
- 6 Election of Office Bearers and Committee Members
- 7 Any other business

Areas of Land on the Hill

For some months there has been no real change in the position regarding the Zoo's development proposals. The Friends of Corstorphine Hill have heard nothing about any specific proposals for the Zoo's housing development on its most westerly land adjoining Kaimes Road. Regarding the Zoo's proposal to acquire 1.37 hectares of land currently owned by the Council in the Corstorphine Hill Local Nature Reserve to the east of the Zoo and to the north of the Murrayfield Hospital and to give the Council slightly more land in the form of a long narrow strip in exchange, there have been some meetings, but no progress. At the latest meeting an independent consultant, Sue Bell, presented to Council representatives and the FOCH committee an Ecological Study assessing the two areas involved. Both areas include some interesting plants and habitats, but the ecological value of the area the Zoo would gain would be greatly reduced by their driving a road through it and probably having a car park and buildings. The value of the area the Zoo would give up to the Council would be reduced by its inclusion of an area composed of, in effect, a midden, and some inaccessible ground and the need to move fences just a few yards, which cause the maximum destruction of ground and habitats for the minimum gain.

On the whole issue of this ground the Zoo wants to gain from the Local Nature Reserve, FOCH continues to be opposed to the Council giving up this land. Local Nature Reserves are created to defend the ground from development and to maintain public access and enjoyment. This area of rough open ground with a few trees provides excellent walking, children's play and dog exercising space with tremendous views over towards the Pentlands. Taking about half of this space into the Zoo with a prominent new fence as a new boundary would greatly reduce the value of the area to the community. The Zoo claims that it needs this ground to allow it to create a new road giving access to the upper parts of the Zoo within modern rules about how steep a new road is allowed to be to allow good access for people with disabilities. We have repeatedly asked them for a map showing where the road would go and what else would be in the area they wish to acquire, and a proper explanation of why this is the only way of providing good access and how it would work in detail, but have never received any of this essential information. Alternatives should be examined, such as increasing this bus service within the Zoo, which for years has carried visitors to the top and all round the Zoo. With proper information, FOCH and other concerned local organisations and individuals could have a reasoned discussion with the Zoo. Without good information any intelligent debate and consideration of alternatives is impossible. FOCH will present its arguments to the Council, urging it not to give up this valuable public land and to create a sensible debate about alternative ways for the Zoo to achieve its objectives.

Donald Gorrie

Recent Friends Events

We have had three very interesting and quite well attended talks over the winter, one about the work of the Forth Pilots, one on Bats and the East Lothian Bat Hospital, and the the most recent on the Geology and early history of Corstorphine Hill by one of our former active members, now an Honorary Member, Dr David McAdam.

Any ideas for future talks or speakers would be very welcome.

The December Social went ahead in spite of the snow and an enjoyable social evening was had by the hardy souls who braved the elements to attend !

Forthcoming Events

The first of the **Guided Walks** on the Hill will be a Bird Walk and Watch led by Keith Donnelly and Martin Craven on **Saturday 7th May, starting at 10.00 am** from the Clermiston Road North car park.

The Corstorphine Hill Tower will be open to visitors every **Sunday afternoon 2-4 pm, from 1st May until the end of September**. We hope to repeat last year's success when we more than doubled the number of visitors by increasing opening from fortnightly to weekly. I will be circulating our group of volunteers who open the Tower in the next few weeks to arrange the rota. If you can spare a few Sunday afternoons this summer to help keep open this important local viewpoint, please contact me soon.

Gordon Swann 0131 334 4769, email gandmswann@blueyonder.co.uk.

Keep watching the notice boards on the Hill, in the High Street, Heritage Centre and libraries for details of more summer events !

Gordon Swann

CAN YOU HELP.....

The history of Corstorphine Hill Tower is well documented in our book "Corstorphine Hill - The Finest Views the Eye Can Feast on" and also in the Dower House records.

However, we have had contact from a person living in New Zealand whose grandmother seems to have a connection with the W G Walker who donated the Tower to the City in 1933,he writes:-

"I am a descendant of the Walker family, my grandmother (on my mothers side) was Margaret Walker. She was born in Dunedin, New Zealand in about 1893. My grandmother died in 1984 and my mother in May 2010. I have been left items relating to the Tower, ie an agenda detailing the handing over ceremony, a key and a painting of the Tower by William Miller dated 1934. I would like to get more information on W G Walker to complete my family tree."

We have checked with the Dower House and they had not seen the copy of the agenda, so we have left them a photocopy for their archives. We have tried to trace further on W G Walker without success and also William Miller who did the painting.

Does anyone have information on W G Walker and William Miller? If so, please contact Fred Davies, (Treasurer), 5 Saughtonhall Place, Edinburgh EH12 5RH or Tel: 0131 337 9232

Fred Davies

The Green Shoots Have Appeared

Yes, the green shoots are again visible in the Walled Garden after their winter hibernation. Following a hard winter the gardening team have been busy tidying and generally carrying out garden maintenance.

Just before the snow arrived a plan had been formed of the work most needing attention so when the white blanket departed, tree pruning and other items could be tackled. Therefore once the spring growth takes off it should look more managed.

As with all gardens there is always something to do, so come along to help and enjoy the peaceful atmosphere in the sunshine whilst feeling good about helping.

Work teams meet on Tuesday mornings, Thursday afternoons and in the summer on Saturday mornings.

Notes from the Ranger

The tail end of 2010 was quite spectacular; unpredictable snow showers of mammoth volumes! The Countryside Ranger Service were inundated with reports of fallen trees and blocked paths, likewise the Council Forestry Team were extremely busy clearing fallen trees and limbs from roads, pavements and properties. To alleviate the pressure on them, Rangers qualified in chainsaw use spent a great deal of time keeping off-road paths open and safe. Worst hit was the Water of Leith Walkway, especially on the upper section where some snow drifts encountered were chest depth! Corstorphine Hill got off relatively lightly, some trees came down, mostly fallen limbs which were dealt with as reports came in or we came across them.

The exceptional weather meant that relatively few activities took place on the Hill (with the exception of sledging and skiing); regular patrols were maintained; once the weather subsided, litter became more apparent and has been cleared; the old threshold signage has been replaced (at a very reasonable cost) with clearer signs which now state 'Local Nature Reserve' rather than just 'LNR' through our developing relationship with the Prison Service; access from Corstorphine Road has been improved whereby you can now avoid the steep, rutted section and follow the boundary round by the golf course with ease.

Several events are taking place over the coming months whereby we will be taking part in the Walking Festival with walks over several of our sites including Corstorphine Hill. As always, the ever popular Badger Watches will take place (book early to avoid disappointment as numbers are restricted, see www.edinburgh.gov.uk/countrysiderangers for more information).

The Countryside Ranger Service is taking part in the National Spring Clean 2011 and will coordinate community clean ups in parks that obtained Green Flag Awards last year.

In April 2010, volunteers in Scotland broke the all-time record when 83,668 of them took action to spring clean their neighbourhoods at 1,406 clean ups. In total, they collected enough litter to fill 42,000 standard domestic wheelie bins and Keep Scotland Beautiful is now recruiting even more volunteers for 2011. The Ranger Service will coordinate a large scale event for Corstorphine Hill Local Nature Reserve on Wednesday 13th April. Rangers will be positioned at strategic locations in the park to allow volunteers to help clean up a given area. The ultimate objective is to make this special park, a quality greenspace for people and nature to enjoy! There is more information on our website .

Main meeting place: Clermiston Road North car park; Wednesday 13th April from 10.30am until 3pm. Please note the car park is very small and but on street parking is available.

David Kyles

Friends of Corstorphine Hill

Registered as a charity No. SCO28842

Chairman: Mr E Price, Corstorphine Hill Avenue Edinburgh EH12 6LF. Tel 0131 539 1088

Secretary: Mr D Gorrie, Garscube Terrace Edinburgh EH12 6BW. Tel 0131 337 2077

Website: www.corstorphinehill.org.uk