



# Friends of Corstorphine Hill

## NEWSLETTER No.49

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Registered Charity No. SCO 28842

### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



**Our Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> April at 7.30 pm in the Capital Hotel. Please come along and give us your opinions and ideas about what we have been doing and what we might do in the future.**

We have enjoyed an interesting programme of events over the winter. The evening talks in the Capital Hotel have included : 'Birds of Corstorphine Hill', 'Houses of Corstorphine Hill', and most recently, 'Secret Shipwrecks of the Forth'. In February we visited the Corstorphine Heritage Centre to be shown the Corstorphine Tust museum and archives by the Archivist Mrs Frances MacRae, who maintains the local records and also does local Genealogy. We had our usual very enjoyable winter social for volunteers in December. It is an opportunity to thank everyone for their work for the Friends, and it's always nice to meet people you may not see very often.

Last Autumn the Parks and Greenspaces Service invited us along with all the other Friends groups in the City to form a Friends of Edinburgh Parks Forum. The group has formed, and so far have had three meetings. The Forum is still defining its role and how it will work with the Council. FoCH committee were a little sceptical about the value of the Forum at first, but I feel as one of the oldest and by far the largest Friends group, we should participate.

The Friends of Corstorphine Hill website has been completely reformatted over the winter, and now looks much more attractive and up to date. Much of the material has been edited and updated, and we are committed to further improvements and updates.

### Scotland's Gardens

The garden at Redcroft, 23 Murrayfield Rd. will be open for Scotland's Gardens on Sunday May 4<sup>th</sup> 2pm-5pm and Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> May 10am-1pm. More information on [www.scotlandsgardens.org](http://www.scotlandsgardens.org)



www.clipartof.com 1058343

# SUMMER PROGRAMME

## Birdwatching Walk

On Corstorphine Hill, Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May.

This will be led by author Ian Moore. Please meet at the top of Cairnmuir Road at 9am



## CORSTORPHINE FAIR. 7<sup>th</sup> June 2014

We will again be represented at the Corstorphine Fair event on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> June, at St Margaret's Park. Come along and join in the fun and visit us, where we will be on hand to answer any questions you may have about our work and you can look at some photographs from our collection.



### **Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> June 'Natives, Naturalised, and Nasties'**

Brian Moffat will lead his annual ramble over the Hill to look at wild plants. **The walk starts at 2pm at the Walled Garden.**

### **View of the Garden.....**



Well, it's nearly the end of February and it's been a strange winter in the Walled Garden.

Almost no snow, little frost, and an awful lot of wind and water! The bog garden looks more like a pond and the snowdrops and other spring bulbs are well ahead. The golden yellow hamamelis (witch hazel) is particularly good this year along with the pink and white viburnum blossom.

Having taken down the central aspen trees inside the garden, general light levels have improved. Less welcome is the more open outlook to the north: several trees were irreparably damaged in the storms, particularly on the lane leading to the Walled Garden and the Air Traffic Control tower. The biggest loss here is the mature hornbeam-uprooted in the gale- which the Council were forced to take down for safety reasons, along with the two oaks.

***Please give a try to volunteering in the Garden this spring and summer. Just come along Tuesday 11-1pm or Thursday 2-4pm. Experience not essential!***



PS: Our Green Flag application for the Garden has been submitted for 2014 and a "mystery shopper" judge is promised...Also the detailed Green Flag Assessment for Corstorphine Hill as a whole for 2013 gave a score of 75%, rated "excellent".

Peter Taylor.

## *The Man Who Built a Tower.....William MacFie.*

Sugar was an important commodity in the 18th and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries so John MacFie became a sugar merchant and his large family became known as “The Sugar MacFie’s”

His son William was born in Cramond in 1822 and grew up with a passion for reading and the writings of Sir Walter Scott. He married Mary Ramsay Colvin (30 years his junior) in 1872 at Cramond, where her father was minister at Cramond Parish Church. By this time he was a wealthy landowner and they took up residence at Clermiston House. The estate belonged to eminent physician Sir Alexander Dick and afterwards to Samuel Mitchelson, who built the mansion house in 1792. After two other owners the 124 acres including Corstorphine Hill came into the possession of William MacFie. {The house was demolished in 1970 to make way for Queen Margaret College and is now housing}

They had four children and the census of 1891 reveals the lifestyle they had at Clermiston House and the people who lived there:-

William MacFie	(age 69) Head	Sugar Merchant	Born – Leith
Mary Ramsay MacFie	(age 39) Wife		Born – Cannongate
William Colvin MacFie	(age 17) Son	Scholar	Born – Corstorphine
Walter Scott MacFie	(age 16) Son	Scholar	Born - “
Charles Edward MacFie	(age 9) Son	Scholar	Born - “
Dorothea (Annie)MacFie	(age 6) Daughter		Born - “

Jessie L. Colvin	Sister in Law	Born – Cramond
Jane Weir	Governess	Born – Aberdeen
Jane Ballantyne	Cook	Born – Linlithgow
Mary Cameron	Laundrymaid	Born – Perthshire
Jane McIntosh	Table Maid	Born – Inverness
Jessie Patience	Housemaid	Born – Cromarty
Agnes Steel	Laundress	Born – St Andrews

Occupants of a bothy on the estate:-

William Mckenzie	Coachman	Born – Ratho
Neil McLean	Groom	Born – Stirling
Joseph Rudge	Gardener	Born – Wick

He built Corstorphine Hill Tower in 1871 to mark the centenary of Sir Walter Scott. It was later presented to the City of Edinburgh by Mr W. G. Walker in 1932 in a ceremony conducted at the Tower.

***The Tower is opened each Sunday (2pm till 4pm), by volunteers from the Friends, starting from Sunday 4th May until the Open Doors Days in September. We do hope you can come and behold the magnificent view from the top which William MacFie and his family have left us.***

***PLEASE NOTE: The Tower is not suitable for children under 8 years of age.***

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



### ***City of Edinburgh Council Natural Heritage Service***

#### **Newsletter article – produced Feb/March 2014**

You may not believe me but Corstorphine Hill came off rather well after the high winds we experienced on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 2013. The destruction witnessed in areas like London Road Gardens was devastating. Given the sheer number of trees Corstorphine Hill holds, to lose perhaps a dozen trees was quite a low number. That said, the type and stature of some of the trees lost was quite valuable. Most notably was the loss of the mature hornbeam which sat towards the foot of Tower Drive (just below the Walled Garden) – said to be one of the best specimens in Edinburgh if not further afield. All of the dangerous trees and trees across paths should now be clear with some aesthetical tidying still to do in places.

You may have witnessed some members of Glendale (one of CEC Parks Framework Contractors) undertaking some work on the north east side of the Hill around late January/early February. They were asked to clear some stands of salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*) with a view to quantify the cost and time associated with removing this Invasive Non-native Species (INNS). From the figures received, extrapolation across the whole site will be undertaken and included within the updated site management plan due December this year. This will then give us a realistic figure to try to achieve some kind of control over this problematic plant.

Over the winter, the Natural Heritage Service alongside other Parks Officers has been looking at areas of grass on Corstorphine Hill with a view to improving biodiversity and reducing cutting costs. We are looking at the prospect of creating a wildflower meadow in the area of rank vegetation opposite the zoo fence just in from Kaimes/Cairnmuir access. We are also looking at reducing the areas of standard amenity grass on the western slopes especially on the margins and small pockets within. This will not in any way impact on regular user pursuits but will improve overall biodiversity on site. Hopefully these changes will be subtle with no impact on regular day to day activities on the Hill.

The John Muir Way is a new coast to coast trail which takes in a small part of Corstorphine Hill. Celebratory launch events will be taking place over the whole route leading to and over the Easter Weekend. **The Natural Heritage Service will be leading a walk from the Water of Leith Conservation Trust at Longstone to Corstorphine Hill beginning at 2pm on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April 2014. Booking is essential as numbers are limited – call 0131 529 2401 to reserve a space.**

As always, we still rely on information from regular users of the site in any respect so if you do encounter anything untoward or have a suggestion on how to improve the site please get in touch via the contact information below.

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