

Friends of Corstorphine Hill

NEWSLETTER No.50

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Registered Charity No. SCO 28842

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOLLOWING THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held in the Capital Hotel 24th April



We had a successful meeting, chairman Gordon Swann updated members on several topics:

The Edinburgh-wide **Friends of Parks Forum** had now been set up, covering nearly 40 Friends groups, to assist in the management and improvement of parks. Most groups and parks are considerably smaller than FOCH. The forum was presently devising how it would work.

A Newsletter is being produced, including, for example, information about a restoration project at Saughton Park and courses on the control of invasive species. More information is available on the council web site.

The Edinburgh Field Archaeology Society have been working on the Hill, recording cup-markings and investigating remnants of a wall near the Tower. No interesting discoveries have been made yet, but they will return again this year.

This April had seen the official opening of the **John Muir Way** extension to Helensburgh on the Firth of Clyde. This now formed the first long-distance footpath wholly in Central Scotland. The Natural Heritage Officer had led a walk from the Water of Leith Centre over Corstorphine Hill to South Queensferry, going by way of the Walled Garden. Detailed information on the route was on the web site : johnmuirway.org

The Chairman introduced local resident Richard van Hagen, who had been instrumental in the restoration and subsequent maintenance of the "Rest and Be Thankful" viewpoint on the hill. Richard gave a detailed account of the background and rich history associated with this place, both in fact and in fiction.

Botanist and committee member Brian Moffat drew attention to the close similarities between "**Sweet Cicely**" a foraged, aniseed-scented wild plant, and "**Hemlock**" a poisonous plant with red-tinged stems, smelling of mice, which should not even be touched, and is best avoided. Brian will put more information on the Friends web site.

Peter Taylor reported on the continuing work on the Walled Garden which had again been awarded the **Green Flag** in 2013. The garden was well ahead for the time of year and recent work on masonry repairs and path drainage had been very welcome to the small team of regular gardeners. The results of the Green Flag "Mystery Shopper" judging for 2014 were awaited with interest.

Finally, Gordon advised that the FOCH web site was now updated and relevant and would continue to be expanded.

SUMMER PROGRAMME

Sunday 20th July, “Butterflies, Bees & Beasties”.



Gordon Swann and David Adamson will lead a hunt, with nets etc. for smaller inhabitants of the Hill. Nets and Bug Bottles provided. Children, old and young, especially those good at catching things very welcome!
Meet at the Walled Garden at 2pm.

Sunday 17th August, “Trees of Corstorphine Hill”.

Dr Brian Moffat will show us the variety of trees, common and uncommon including the famous Corstorphine Sycamore, in a ramble over the hill.

Meet at the Walled Garden at 2pm.



Sunday 14th September, “Fungus Foray”



David Adamson will lead another of his very popular searches for interesting fungi on the Hill. Suitable for all the family.
Meet at the Kaimes/Cairnmuir Road car park at 2pm.

Walls, Water and Weigela

At the beginning of June, the **Walled Garden** is abundant with colour, water and growth everywhere, especially the grass and the rabbits. New plantings of variegated luma, orange lilies, ferny-leafed sorbaria, pink lavatera and leptospermum seem to be taking well and old favourites like the weigela blossom and the euphorbia are having a very good year.



The milder winter and warm spring have contributed to what promises to be an excellent year. Not everything in the garden is rosy, however. The recent torrential, thundery rain has again washed out the sloping paths, including those recently re-laid by the Council, despite the attractive new stone cross-drains. The rain may have been exceptional, but these days we rather doubt it! Repairs by the Council to the final section of wall on the north east side have been very successful and much appreciated.

The bog garden is the wettest it has been for years and the new pebbles are, meantime, below the intended water level. The yellow flag iris is appearing with a large hosta, and the blue flag irises are glorious everywhere in the garden. The addition of “non-slip” paint should reduce maintenance work on the decking. Although often blissfully quiet, the garden continues to welcome healthy numbers of visitors, some of whom come to work. We were pleased to host a group of 24 Primary 6 pupils and their teacher and helpers from Stenhouse Primary School which made for a lively but worthwhile morning.

Regular volunteer sessions are on **Tuesdays 11am-1pm, and Thursdays 2-4pm.** All tools provided and no experience necessary – why not give it a try?

We will remember them...

Scottish soldiers who served in the First World War are to be commemorated with a "living memorial" of new native woodland on an area used by the military.

Over the next four years more than 50,000 trees including oak, birch and rowan will be planted on land that has been used by army personnel for training for more than a century on the MoD training estate at Dreghorn. Scotland's First World War Centenary Wood is being created by the Woodland Trust Scotland working in partnership with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO).

It is one of four being planted by the charity across the UK. The new woodland in the Pentland Hills will include features such as a memorial avenue of 50 wild service trees that will break into vivid reds in autumn. Wildflowers including poppies will be sown to provide colour while the new trees grow and mature. A formal commemoration area will also be created to provide a focal point for remembrance.

The charity is appealing to the public to raise £500,000 towards the cost of the project in Scotland.

Forty hectares of native woodland will be created to extend and buffer existing woods on the site. The majority of the trees will be planted this autumn and next spring. Local schoolchildren will be given the chance to be involved in tree planting events over the next four years.

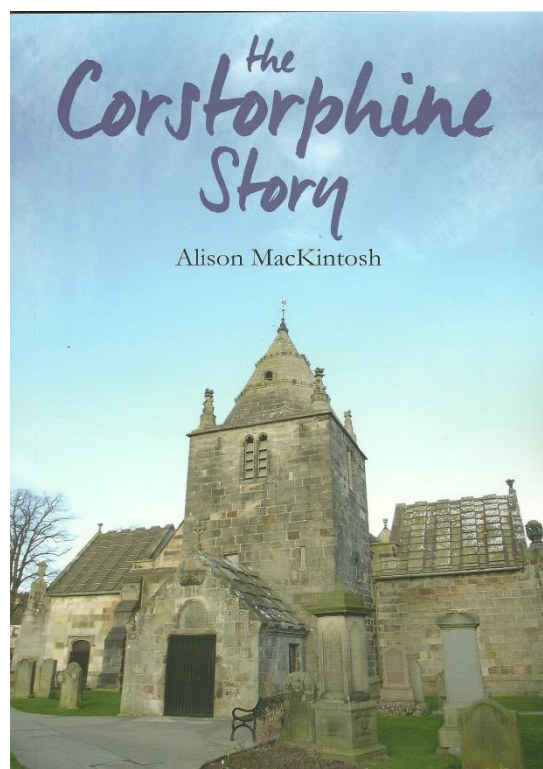


NEW BOOK.....by Alison MacKintosh.

Just published This book tells the story of the people of Corstorphine from the earliest surviving records to the present century. It is the story of how people lived, how they earned their money, how they enjoyed themselves, their crimes, their mischief, and how they were punished. Liberally illustrated with archive photographs, it tells of the people's triumphs, tragedies, joys and sorrows, of their farming, religion, witchcraft, education, transport, politics, sport and entertainment. It is a human story, full of interesting connections.

The book takes its inspiration from Miss A S Cowper's Historic Corstorphine and Round About, which is a treasury of meticulous research

The book is available from the Corstorphine Trust. £15



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



City of Edinburgh Council Natural Heritage Service

Report to the Annual General Meeting 24th April 2014

Local and corporate volunteers had been very active during the year, doing essential work on controlling non-native species. It is hoped that the new Management Plan for the Hill would include funds for this purpose. Working with Hugh Edwards, we made use stem injection guns to combat growths of Japanese knotweed. Also contractors had dealt with a considerable area of salmonberry, at a cost of £2.50 per metre square. A reduction in road kill had been noted.

A number of mature trees had been lost through wind damage. The most notable of these was a large hornbeam on Tower Drive near the Walled Garden.

The Council was very grateful for the work of members of the Friends in opening the Tower and Walled Garden and many other areas. Improvements had been made to the wall and some paths in the Walled Garden, involving a significant spend by the Council. The new Management Plan for the Hill would be issued as a consultation document, probably in August.

No further progress had been made with proposals for allotments on the site of a former plant nursery at the Balgreen Road side of the Hill, but this may form part of the long term Management Plan.

As part of the “living landscapes” policy, grass cutting on the Hill would in future be further from the tree line. Also as part of the process of combating non-native species, considerable planting of young trees was intended. Path networks on the north east side of the Hill would be mechanically cleared in future. Also a survey of the location and condition of wells on the Hill would be undertaken.

Access issues on the Hill included access by the Fire Brigade when required and, despite the barrier adjacent to Clermiston Road North car park, articulated lorries with cranes had recently stolen valuable timber from the temporary store along the lane. Finally it was noted that the roads department had succeeded in dealing with the surface water problem near the 26 bus terminus.

Update from Grant More, “nuclear bunker” work:-

The main focus at present is on completing the recovery of the site and buildings.

Low growing plants are being planted and graffiti removed.

Beehives are being installed in a secure area.

A future edition of BBC documentary “Britain Beneath Our Feet” will feature the site.

More information is available on the web site www.barntonquarry.org.uk

Grant More would be happy to answer any enquiries.

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