

# Friends of Corstorphine Hill

## NEWSLETTER No.51



OCTOBER 2014 Editor: Fred Davies Tel: 337 9232

[www.corstorphinehill.org.uk](http://www.corstorphinehill.org.uk)

(e-mail: [daviesfd@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:daviesfd@blueyonder.co.uk))

Registered Charity No. SCO 28842

### Chairman's Report

The Summer Activities have been well attended this year with good numbers for the walks and storytelling. Tower attendances on Sundays have also been good although unusually, we closed twice in August for severe weather. The Tower will be open:

**2pm-4pm Sat 27th and Sun 28th September, Edinburgh Doors Open Days.**  
*(We are usually very busy so additional volunteers to act as stewards on those days would be very welcome).*

We have an interesting programme of talks for Autumn - Winter, see details on the following pages.. Myself and Brian Moffat participated in a conference for Outdoor Education teachers at the GTC, Clerwood House, in September. The Natural Heritage Service (used to be Rangers Service) , and the Walled Gardeners have been active over the summer as usual - see following Reports.

Best wishes, Gordon Swann.



Walled Garden News.....

Great news for the garden team, we have again won the prestigious **Community Green Flag Award 2014.**

The garden continues to attract a good number of visitors and groups. Continuing work to improve and maintain the garden is always in our plans.

Currently we are looking at a detailed schedule, spread over two or more seasons, to progressively address the need to maintain adequate light and open vistas across the garden and control excessive growth, while keeping the character and attractiveness of the garden as it is now.

As always we are looking for people to help with our endeavours, if you think you could help in any way, call into the garden on a Tuesday 11am-1pm or Thursday 2pm-4pm or call/ e-mail the editor.

***It is with great sadness the committee note the passing of Catherine Wray, she was a valuable worker in the walled garden for many years.***



# *Winter Talks Programme*

*We have an exciting and varied talks programme again this year, we hope something for everyone.*

All talks will be held in the Capital Hotel, Clermiston Road,  
Edinburgh

**Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> November 7.30pm**

**“Ancient Pinewoods of Scotland”**

**Clifton Bain – Director of the International Union for  
Conservation of Nature.**

A journey to the pinewoods offers a natural spectacle alongside a rich cultural heritage with visible traces of the people who have lived and worked there over the centuries. This talk will provide a vivid and striking introduction to the ancient pinewood sites and will explain how their fate has turned from near extinction to a conservation success story.

**Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 7.30pm**

**“The Banton Quarry Project”**

**Grant More**

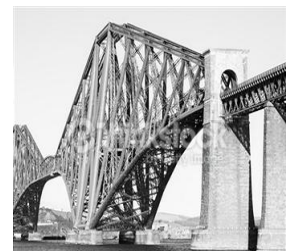
Grant More, from the Barnton Quarry Project will outline what the project hopes to achieve and how work has progressed.

**Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2015 7.30pm**

**“The Briggers... Story of the Men Who Built the  
Forth Rail Bridge”**

**Len Saunders & Frank Hay**

This is the story of the men who built Scotland’s Forth Bridge. Opening in 1890, it became recognised as an icon of Victorian engineering. Less well-known is the story of the thousands of men who worked on it, the Briggers.



## **Introduction to our forthcoming talk (see details in this issue)**

**FORTH RAIL BRIDGE.** The coming of the railways to Scotland initially had the effect of sidelining the traditional Forth ferry ports of North Queensferry and South Queensferry. From 1850, Edinburgh was connected to Perth by rail using a roll-on roll-off ferry directly linking Granton near Leith and Burntisland in Fife.

This all changed in 1879 when construction began on a railway suspension bridge. This was designed by Thomas Bouch builder of the Tay Railway Bridge that had opened the previous year. The collapse of the Tay Bridge with large loss of life on 28 December 1879 brought a halt to work on Bouch's Forth Bridge with just part of one pier built. The completely redesigned bridge that was started in 1883 remains one of the world's most distinctive structures. It was opened by Edward, Prince of Wales on 4 March 1890. The bridge was constructed by Sir William Arrol to a design by civil engineers Sir John Fowler and Sir Benjamin Baker. In the aftermath of the Tay Bridge disaster the bridge was a testament to robust and conservative over-engineering. The end result is a massive and remarkably imposing structure. It was built as three separate double cantilevers. When each had been constructed, they were linked together by 350ft long girder spans joined to the main structure of the bridge by huge pins. The whole bridge is balanced by 1000 ton counterweights on the outside of the outer cantilever structures.

Although it was formally opened in 4 March 1890, the bridge was first used some weeks earlier, on 21 January. On that day two 1,000ft long test trains each comprising a locomotive and 50 wagons, and each weighing 900 tons, rolled onto the bridge side by side from the south. The bridge easily survived the test: though following the Tay disaster it is interesting to wonder about the feelings of the crews of those first trains as they looked down at the river 150 feet below them.

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



## ***City of Edinburgh Council Natural Heritage Service Sept.2014***

What a great summer it has been and continues to be! Corstorphine Hill is looking fantastic, especially with the range of colours now developing as the leaves change.

Regular site inspections have occurred throughout the summer season with the occasional party debris encountered and small fire sites being cleared. There are regular walkers on the Hill who clear rubbish when encountered and this is very much appreciated by the Natural Heritage Service. Some remedial actions to the wall at the Walled Garden and improvements to path surfacing and drainage were undertaken earlier in the year.

There has been the usual seasonal push in dealing with the problematic Himalayan balsam. Several schools and volunteer groups have assisted with control measures however; it seems as if only the surface is being scratched! The fight is slowly being lost! A change of approach is necessary with increased resource and hopefully the updated site management plan scheduled for 2015 will enable this to happen.

Attention is now turning to Salmonberry removal over the winter. This is only done out with the nesting season. An enthusiastic group from Lloyds Banking volunteered recently and cleared some large areas. The arisings will be burnt onsite once dried out. Students from the Royal High School will be volunteering their time over the winter period as part of their John Muir Award specifically dealing with Salmonberry.



Lloyds Banking Group volunteers 12/09/

There has been a mixture of different questions and concerns raised regarding cycling on Corstorphine Hill of late. Cycling is permitted as long as it is done responsibly in line with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. Corstorphine Hill is used as a commuter route; it is used by mountain bike enthusiasts and also for family cycling. Conflict does arise between the many different user groups who frequent the Hill and the Natural Heritage Service aim to resolve such conflict when it arises. This can be quite challenging to do. Currently, there is an emphasis on keeping path edge vegetation down and overhanging/encroaching branches back enabling better sightlines on the formal path network. Some path sections that have a steeper gradient and blind corners will have chicanes installed aimed at slowing down some speedy cyclists. Engagement with regular cycling groups will continue and where necessary advice and education offered to demonstrate responsible access. There will be some additional onsite signage produced too.

We rely on information from site users 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.

**City of Edinburgh Council Natural Heritage Service**  
**Hermitage of Braid**  
**69a Braid Road, Edinburgh**  
**EH10 6JF**  
**0131 529 2401**

[naturalheritageservice@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:naturalheritageservice@edinburgh.gov.uk)