

# Friends of Corstorphine Hill

## NEWSLETTER No.61



Spring 2018 Editor: Fred Davies Tel: 337 9232

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Registered Charity No. SCO 28842

### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:-

This winter we have had two excellent Talks, on Ships in the Forth from Ian McGeachy, and Sir Walter Scott by Professor David Purdie.

As you will see below, we have one more talk in March, and then walks on the Hill each month from April to September.

We are scheduled to open the Tower as usual, each Sunday pm from May to September. We are hoping that the work on the Tower will take place in February as the contractor has been appointed and seems almost ready to proceed, David Kyles is keeping us informed.

You may have noticed major works going on at Saughton Park recently. This is the start of a £6 million project with National Lottery funding. The older parts of the park will be completely renewed including the nurseries and formal gardens, also buildings such as the Winter Gardens, rebuilding the bandstand.

You should be aware that the Budget deliberations are currently going on, and it may not be too late to write to your local councillors reminding them of the importance of Edinburgh's Parks and Greenspaces to local communities. The budget for Parks and Greenspaces was severely cut last year and the maintenance staff reduced by 20%. It is unlikely they will be able to manage our parks in the future in the same way as they used to.

Further cuts would be very difficult to manage.

We hope to see you at our future events, and of course at the AGM. Best wishes,  
**Gordon Swann.**

**MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL. (£1)** Most memberships are due between **January and March** each year. We enclose/attach with this Newsletter a renewal membership form for completion and return with your fee/donation. It is important that we keep our files up to date each year, so your prompt return would be appreciated, this will also ensure that you get your Newsletter as usual.

*As with last year, (for people who get a paper copy of the Newsletter) a membership form which is aimed at NEW members is enclosed, and we would ask that current members distribute it to neighbours and friends. Thank you on behalf of the committee for your continued support.*

# SPRING PROGRAMME

## Work of the Scottish Wildlife Trust, featuring the Lothian Area

talk by Gordon Swann

*Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2018 7.30pm Capital Hotel, Clermiston Road,  
Edinburgh*



## Annual General Meeting Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2018.

**Heritage Centre, St. Margaret's Park.  
7.30pm (Refreshments)**

**Afterwards- photographs "Wildlife on the Hill through the  
Seasons" will be shown.**



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## Highlights of Corstorphine Hill walk.

**Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> April. Meet at Walled Garden  
2pm**

Gordon Swann will lead this walk based on a new booklet  
devised by Ian Moore. It lasts about 2 hours but there are  
shortcuts back to the start for those wishing a shorter walk.



## Bird Walk with Ian Moore

The popular bird walk will take place on

***Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> May***

**We meet at the Rest and Be Thankful at 9am.**

## **BIRD REPORT----**



With its rich biodiversity and wide range of habitats, Corstorphine Hill is an important feeding site for birds in winter. And there is something of a 'Birds of a Feather' phenomenon at this time of year – as related species flock together, reflecting their similar adaptations to diet. In the woods there have been parties of Blue, Great, Coal and Long-tailed Tits, often accompanied by Treecreepers, Goldcrests and Nuthatches. There is some suggestion that a group affords better protection – more pairs of eyes alert to the local Sparrowhawks. On the heathland areas it is finches that have predominated – with mixed flocks of Goldfinches, Greenfinches, Chaffinches and Bullfinches – feeding largely on the seed heads of what was a bumper 2017 crop of ragwort. Meanwhile, the open fields have attracted four species of gulls: the resident Herring Gulls, wintering Common and Black-headed Gulls, and over-wintering Lesser Black-backs (which really ought to be in Iberia); these have been joined by small flocks of Oystercatchers and Rooks. Finally, the thrush family. Icelandic Redwings arrived in October to feast upon the plentiful fruits of holly, hawthorn and rowan. As supplies dwindled in January they moved into the woods to forage in the leaf litter alongside their resident cousins: Blackbirds, and Song and Mistle Thrushes. For pictures of many of these sightings, see the Friends of Corstorphine Hill wildlife photoblog at: <https://chilloutdoors.tumblr.com>

### **Redcroft Garden Opening Sunday 6th May**

All members and their friends will be very welcome at the opening of Anna and James Buxton's garden, Redcroft, 23 Murrayfield Road. It is on Sunday 6th May from 2 to 5pm. Redcroft is a walled garden surrounding an Arts and Crafts villa which provides an unexpected haven off the busy road. It is planted and maintained with shape and texture in mind. Acid soil and relative shelter allow a wide range of plants to be grown. In early May there should be a fine display of colour from rhododendrons and other flowering shrubs, trees in flower, and plenty of tulips and other bulbs, both in pots and in the garden.

There will be a good plant sale run by the Scotland's Gardens local committee and teas in the yard. Admission £4, children free and very welcome. No dogs.

In aid of the Church of the Good Shepherd, Murrayfield.

Easy parking, buses 12, 26, 31, 38.

Contact Anna Buxton [annabuxtonb@aol.com](mailto:annabuxtonb@aol.com) for more information.

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



### ***City of Edinburgh Council Forestry & Natural Heritage Service Report***

It has been a busy start to the year for our Service and out on the hill! We were made aware of a campsite on the southern slopes and after monitoring for a while, it became apparent that the camp was abandoned and it was cleared. Please do report any such instances to us as in certain circumstances it can mean contravention of Parks Management Rules and non-compliance with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. It is especially concerning when damage to trees and scrub is encountered. The graffiti at the south (Balgreen) entrance to the site has also been highlighted to Waste Services to remove.

The route of the John Muir Way (specifically above Kaimes/Cairnmuir entrance) has been improved through help and funding provided by Central Scotland Green Network Trust, BugLife, the Royal Zoological Society and others through transformation of rank grass and ruderal vegetation into areas much more diverse with grass species and wildflowers. Broadcasting yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) seed in areas such as described helps to break up the dense grass sward and open up areas for colonisation by other species that might not get a chance. This should be noticeable through the growing season and we will instigate an end of year annual cut to assist the development of the area over time.

We are continuing our control efforts relating to non-native plant species, look out for information out on site or in future newsletters detailing any events we may require assistance with. Prior to nesting season, we have a number of corporate enquiries hopefully coming to fruition where some clearance work will be carried out.

The boundary fence on the eastern slope with Craigmuck Paddock is solely the responsibility of the City of Edinburgh Council. It has been since 1927 when the original fence was installed. We have begun a programme of phased replacement/removal of existing fence and subsequent others that have been installed over time. We hope to complete this work by spring.

There are several events and site use bookings from orienteering clubs, dance academies and local schools all wishing to use the hill for their own purposes. It is useful for me as site manager to know who is in, roughly where and how many so to avoid conflict over space, inform of any site management works that may affect proceedings and to ensure the site is used in a clean, sustainable manner. I have been made aware of a group utilising an area of the hill towards the Hillpark development for "outdoor educational" type of activity. I have concerns over the exact nature and type of use here where evidence is clearly left on site whilst the area is not to be used. Can I encourage this group to get in touch please, my contact details are below.

As highlighted elsewhere in this newsletter, Corstorphine Hill Tower is earmarked for some remedial works, most of these costs being met through fundraising efforts carried out by the Friends of Corstorphine Hill (FoCH), these should be completed by the end of the current financial year. The efforts by FoCH in relation to the Tower, upkeep and improvements to the Community Walled Garden, provision of winter talks programme and summer walks and all the other work involved cannot be commended enough. I encourage all who may be able to help or assist with such efforts to get in touch direct or through myself.

**David Kyles**

**City of Edinburgh Council Forestry & Natural Heritage Service**

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