

Friends of Corstorphine Hill

NEWSLETTER No.72



July 2023 Editor: Fred Davies Tel: 337 9232

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Registered Charity No. SCO 28842

Chairman's Report.

Welcome our first Newsletter of 2023.

The last year has been busy, and I would like to pay tribute to all the work done by our committee and our volunteers, particularly:

Fred Davies, tireless Treasurer and Newsletter Editor

Peter Taylor, Secretary and Walled Garden Worker

Rowan Muir for maintaining and improving the website and also our Facebook page

Ian Moore for his regular Corstorphine Hill Blog beautifully illustrated by his photographs.

Hugh Edwards for his tireless work in the Walled Garden.

You will have noticed that the Council have been very busy planting trees on the Hill in the last year, the improvements to the northern path to Balgreen have been done subject to some tidying up after the torrential rain.

There have been many visitors to the Hill and the Garden this year. Fox Covert PS have had a few events in the Garden, and a Rainbows (mini Brownies) group, and a Beavers Group have been to the Tower. The Tower has been opened by our volunteers on Sunday afternoons since 7th May when we had 84 visitors! Since then, numbers have been 20s – 30s depending on the weather. We hope to continue until the last weekend in September, Open Doors Weekend, but we are short of volunteers to provide 3 people at the Tower each Sunday, so any new volunteers would be very welcome. We have organised 3 guided walks on the Hill this year: Discovering the Hill in April, Birds and Plants in May, wildflowers in June.

Les Hutcheon: It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Les Hutcheon. He was a founding member of the Friends and did tremendous work in the walled garden over the years. He was also editor of the Newsletter for many years.

Forthcoming walks will be:

Sunday 6th August

Bug and Beastie Hunt for families- led by Gordon Swann

Remember, children are better at finding things, and please try to bring a small plastic container with a lid, ideally see-through, for trapping beasties.

Meet in the Walled Garden at 2 pm.

Sunday 17th September

Trees and Shrubs in Autumn, a guided walk on the Hill led by Brian Moffat.

Meet in the Walled Garden at 2 pm.

First opening this year of Corstorphine Hill Tower by our volunteers. Sunday 7th May, 2-4 pm.

The tower is open every Sunday until the end of September. Members of the public are welcome to climb the tower and appreciate the wonderful view over the city and the Firth of Forth. Donations towards FoCH's ongoing work on the hill are greatly appreciated if you are able.

Remember the Walled Garden is open every day, cared for by our volunteers.

We need volunteers every year to care for the Garden and open the Tower. Please consider giving a few hours of your time to help us.

Corstorphine Hill The Finest Views the Eye can Feast On

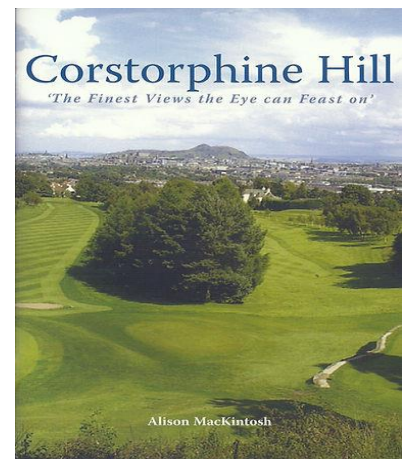
by Alison MacKintosh

ISBN 987 0 9557379 0 9

Reprinted and Updated 2015

This is the first book to draw together the disparate threads in the history of the hill, in the context of the people who have admired and lived on it. It will be welcomed by all those with an interest in the landscape and history of Edinburgh.

This book is available directly from Friends of Corstorphine Hill. To make an enquiry or place an order, please contact us via [email](#) or through our [Facebook](#) page.



Cost of publication: £5.00 + £1.50 postage if req'd

GARDEN UPDATE.....

Not much to add to my April report, but things do keep growing.

The Acanthus planted in the spring of 2022 survived the winter. It's good to see this plant, inspiration for artists and sculptors for millennia, establishing itself. Those who know, say that it can become an invasive pest, so enjoy it while it's docile. Again, it should produce its tall, impressive flower stems later in the summer, baring its bears' teeth for admiration.



After the recent 23mm of rainfall, the water level in the "wetland" overtopped the tadpole plastic basin, and I was able to watch the beasties making a bid for freedom, passing, tadpolefully, into the plashy fen, many without arms, some still legless, there to face a fraught and uncertain future.

Rockery plants have been added to a couple of the stony borders.



Hugh Edwards, July 2023

We have again been awarded the prestigious Green Flag Award for the Walled Garden.

WILDLIFE WALK, SATURDAY 13 MAY 2023 - GUIDE, IAN MOORE



ON A GLORIOUS SPRING MORNING we met at the Balgreen Road entrance to the nature reserve to be greeted almost immediately by the sight of a Roebuck, peering down at us from the path above.

ORANGE TIP BUTTERFLIES tumbled on the breeze, and climbing the steep south slope we pushed through swathes of white-flowering Garlic Mustard, the favoured food plant of their larvae.

ALSO ON THE WING – in vast profusion – were St Mark’s Flies. Black and hovering ominously with their trailing legs,



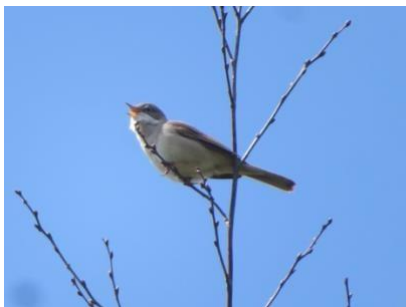
they are quite harmless.

Named after their appearance on St Mark’s Day (25th April), their scientific name is *Bibio marci* – and the trout angler will recognise the “bibio” as a popular artificial pattern.

MOVING INTO THE COPSE along the Spire Hospital boundary, more *Bibio* were in evidence, but now by the beak-full, as we watched a pair of Great Spotted Woodpeckers carrying food to their hungry young, high in a hollowed-out Ash.



BIRDS WERE IN GOOD VOICE, with 22 species in song, and we managed to locate all 4 varieties of warblers, summer



visitors that had recently

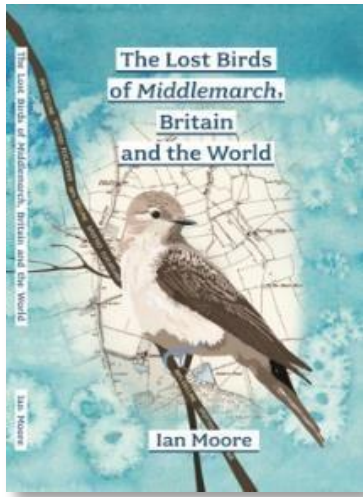
arrived from as far away as sub-Saharan Africa: Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Whitethroat and Willow Warbler.

IT WAS STILL A LITTLE EARLY in the year for a full display of wildflowers, but those in bloom (and with traditional uses in brackets) included Dog Violet (antioxidant), Germander Speedwell (gout), Gorse (salads), Greater Stitchwort (stitch), Pignut (nutty snack), Ramsons (pesto), Spring Beauty (vitamin C) and Wood Sage (herbal tea).



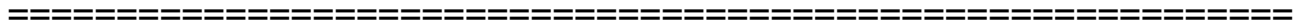
WE STUDIED THE MANY mounds made by Yellow Meadow Ants, that farm aphids deep below the surface; we identified the difference between male and female Holly trees; and we measured and calculated the age of an ancient Beech at 300 years, and going strong. *Just like the Friends of Corstorphine Hill.*

IAN MOORE.



Ian Moore is the author of a new book, ‘*The Lost Birds of Middlemarch, Britain & the World*’. This features a section on the bird life of Corstorphine Hill. All royalties will be donated to wildlife causes, including a share to Friends of Corstorphine Hill. To learn more, [simply click on this link](#).

Photos in this report, all taken on Corstorphine Hill, in chronological order: Roebuck; Orange Tip on Bramble; St Mark’s Flies on Gorse; juvenile Great Spotted Woodpecker at nest hole; Whitethroat and Germander Speedwell.



VOLUNTEER WITH US

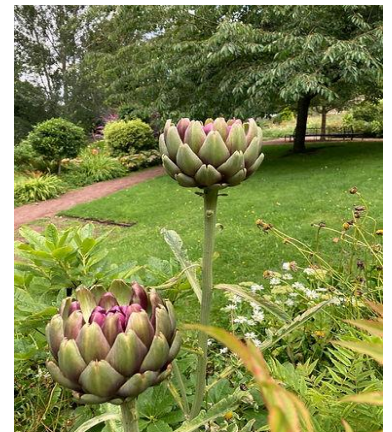


We are always looking for like-minded volunteers for the following:

- committee work
- maintenance of the walled garden (though unfortunately we can only support experienced gardeners at this time)
- giving a talk/leading a walk
- organising talks/organising walks
- taking a turn opening the Tower (this is done with another volunteer).



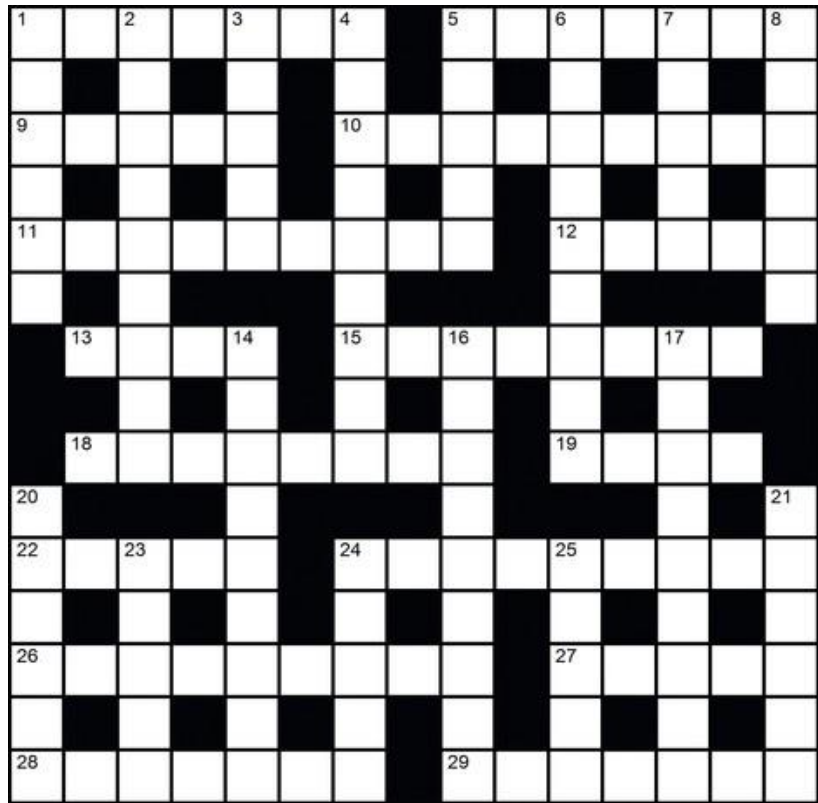
If you would like to volunteer with us please contact us either using our [online form](#) or via [email](#) or [facebook](#). We are a volunteer run organisation and as such depend on the time of our volunteers to arrange these activities. We will always get back to you, though sometimes our response may not be as fast as we would like it to be!



CROSSWORD TEASER..

ACROSS

- 1 A young tree (7)
- 5 Ocean-dwelling cephalopod with eight arms (7)
- 9 Part of a flower that helps to protect and support the petals (5)
- 10 Cliff-nesting seabird with a thick black beak (9)
- 11 Common aquatic plant of Eurasia and the USA; *Hippuris vulgaris* (5, 4)
- 12 Root vegetable that is also known as a rutabaga (5)
- 13 Ocelot, caracal and lynx are all wild ___ (4)
- 15 The study of whales, porpoises and dolphins (8)
- 18 Moss of damp, peaty habitats (8)
- 19 Substance produced by the caterpillar of the moth *Bombyx mori* (4)
- 22 Another name for the snow leopard; also a unit of weight (5)
- 24 Freshwater turtles (9)
- 26 Colourful Old World lizard with a long tongue and zygodactylous feet (9)
- 27 The male ___ damselfly has distinctive blue and black colouring (5)
- 28 The ___ tit is also known as the ___ reedling (7)
- 29 Pollen-producing reproductive organs of flowers (7)



Now, where did I put the answers?

DOWN

- 1 Flowering plant widely cultivated for its oil-rich seeds (6)
- 2 Social insects that construct their nests from wood-pulp (5, 4)
- 3 The Western ___, also known as the Outer Hebrides, are home to corncrakes, hen harriers and golden eagles (5)
- 4 Powerful, pale-plumaged raptor of the Arctic tundra (9)
- 5 The American dipper is also known as the water ___ (5)
- 6 Old-fashioned name for song thrushes (*pictured*) (9)
- 7 Collective noun for lions (5)
- 8 The ___ birch has peeling white bark and produces catkins (6)
- 14 Term for bistort, a Eurasian herbaceous plant with a spike of flowers (9)
- 16 African trees with edible, pod-like fruit (9)
- 17 The common ___ is a US species and a member of the rail family (9)
- 20 A young animal of the genus *Vulpes* (3, 3)
- 21 Flowering plants that may be sea, alpine or goldilocks (6)
- 23 East African lake home to important populations of cichlids (5)
- 24 River in the Scottish Borders well known for its salmon (5)
- 25 Genus of a group of long-tailed lizards found across Africa (5)

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



City of Edinburgh Council Natural Heritage Service Report.

"From an overview perspective, the park has been running along relatively well, I have regular groups from the Green Team and TCV out on site carrying out various work on invasives and planting and upkeep. TCV are soon to start their winter preparations and will be doing groups on site. The Green Flag assessment also took place and, from feedback on the day, appeared to be in good standing. We are still awaiting the final award.

From north to south then,

Rust fungus within the northern woodland is continuing. Though not as spectacular as we were hoping, there is some small evidence it may be slowly gaining hold. We will be carrying out a little more inoculation shortly and hopefully it will overwinter better than last years releases.

Lots of trees in various compartments have been marked for Ash Dieback. When these are eventually felled, I am working closely with Andrew Skirving of CEC's Million trees project to quickly fill the gaps with something more robust (native, of course).

Lots of compartments and tree tubes have been removed to tidy up the areas where they were no longer needed. This was done by our estates team who have also been out doing some infrastructure repairs to the steps just south of the Hillpark Entrance as well as clearing graffiti and tree swings.

As mentioned, TCV have been planting more trees and watering of planted trees will be happening when they can.

Path improvements to the east where the tree came down have been completed and improvements to the path just north of the Rest and Be Thankful should also be coming soon.

To the south, major path improvement works are ongoing and possibly almost complete with the works from the south entrance to the rest and be thankful."

Kind Regards

Andrew Law MSc MECC
Forestry & Natural Heritage, City of Edinburgh Council

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ACROSS

1 Sapling 5 Octopus 9 Sepal 10 Razorbill 11 Marechal 12 Swede 13 Cat 15 Cetology 18 Sphagnum
19 Silk 22 Ounce 24 Terrapins 26 Chameleon 27 Azure 28 Bearded 29 Stamens

DOWN

1 Sesame 2 Paper Wasp 3 Isles 4 Gyrfalcon 5 Ouzel 6 Thrustles 7 Pride 8 Silver 14 Snakeweed
16 Tamarinds 17 Gallinule 20 Foxcub 21 Asters 23 Nyasa 24 Tweed 25 Agama