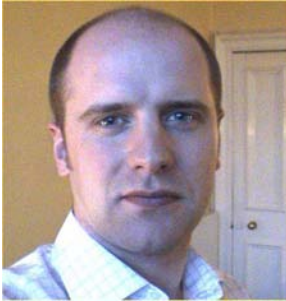




Hill & Hermitage

Newsletter of the Friends of the Hermitage of Braid & Blackford Hill
Spring 2005 Volume 6, Issue 2 ISSN 1470-9945



Dear Reader,

I'm very pleased to present you with this quarter's truly inspirational newsletter; no it really is! After our appeal for you to tell us about literary and artistic references to the Hermitage or to have a go yourself, well you have done us proud.

This edition brings you three articles. The first is from David Land completing his explanation of the geology of the Hermitage of Braid and Blackford Hill. Secondly a poem written by David Burnett 'The Hermitage in Snow' and finally, an article on local artist Cat Outram explaining how the Hermitage has featured in her work - especially inspired by the light, shadow and trees of the park.

Enjoy.

Andrew Coates
Editor

Bedrock Geology of Hermitage of Braid and Blackford Hill by David Land

In a previous article I discussed the origin of Braid Glen and the relation between glacial geology and scenery. (Hill & Hermitage, 3/1, 2001). The present article on the bedrocks of the park completes the description of its geology. It will be useful to refer to the 1999 Scenery and Geology pamphlet while reading this account.

Geologically speaking the bedrocks here are all part of the Pentland Hills, and like them are made from lava flows from volcanoes which erupted between 395 and 410 million years ago, in early Old Red Sandstone times. What was to become part of Scotland was then a tropical desert some distance south of the equator.

Following eruption from a volcanic crater, molten lava cools and solidifies into a mass of tiny ...page 2

From the Committee room ...

Your committee was delighted with the result of last November's Scottish Executive Inquiry into the Midmar Field designation as Green Belt. The Executive's Reporter upheld the Council's designation, in the face of an application to have the site rezoned for housing. You may recall that your committee wrote in 2002 supporting the City Planning Department's defence of the site by insisting on GB status.

The planners have also asked the Friends to approve changes to the South East Local Plan (which covers the entire Green Belt). The changes answer our previous comment that the Plan appeared to strip Hermitage and Blackford Hill of their twin status as a Local Nature Reserve and a Regionally Important Geological Site. The paperwork is now being adapted to correct these omissions, and will also feature the Agassiz Rock.

Your committee has decided to take out a year's subscription to the River Restoration Centre (RRC) at a cost of £100 + VAT. We hope that this will help us to identify ways to improve the Braid Burn as a biological habitat. Your chairman has recently seen a Kingfisher on the Burn, but, once again, this sighting took place outside the LNR area. For more information on the RRC, go to their website at <http://www.therrc.co.uk>

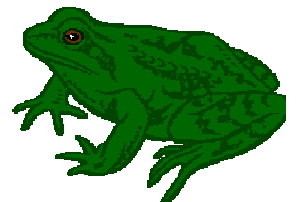
The committee is disappointed to lose two stalwart workers, Morag Smart, and Pete Matthews. Morag has been appointed to a 'rangering' job in Inverness-shire, while Pete begins a course of study down south very soon. The latter's resignation creates a vacancy for Vice-Chairman. We wish Morag and Pete good luck with their careers – and thanks for their work for the Friends.

Finally, we also say goodbye to Duncan Priddle, who is leaving his post as Acting Senior Ranger to take up a new challenge in East Lothian. Duncan helped get the Friends started back in 1999 and will be greatly missed. We presented Duncan with a book token as a parting gift.
Sandy Mullay

Also since the last committee meeting Jeff Maguire has volunteered to attend a council hosted meeting on funding and grant opportunities which may lead to a grant application for the restoration of the doocot. (ed)

Check the forthcoming events section for further information

Charles Montgomery's Amphibia and Reptiles talk.



Burn Clear Up
10th April 2005

Dawn Bird Watch.

HILL & HERMITAGE

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Have you been to one of the Friends events and would like to air your views? If you want to have your article considered for the next newsletter be sure to send it before the next copy deadline.

3rd June 2005

For information about paying your annual membership by **Gift Aid** or about **joining** Friends of the Hermitage of Braid and Blackford Hill, please contact **ROB ELTON** (Membership Secretary) on 0131 667 4079 or email: rob@robeldon.demon.co.uk

interlocking crystals of complex silicate minerals, which differ according to the overall composition of the lava. The small grain size makes studying these rocks difficult without recourse to the microscope and chemical analysis. For this reason, different types of lava are defined in the first place by the percentages of silica they contain. In the Pentlands there are four main types, namely basalt (46 to 54% silica), andesite (54-62%), trachyte (62-70%) and rhyolite (70-74%). These may be distinguished in the field by their appearance at outcrop exposure and in hand specimen.

In this park there are just two types, namely trachyte which crops out in Braid Glen and andesite which makes Blackford Hill. The field characteristics of trachyte are its light brown colour and its weathered surfaces which are knobbly rough to the touch and in appearance. The name is derived from the Greek 'trakhutes' = roughness. On clean faces a faint banding may be discerned. This is a reflection of the internal structure of the rock in which the main component is feldspar, which occurs as tiny elongated crystals which are aligned with the flow of the lava as it cooled. Feldspar is a sodium-calcium-aluminium silicate.

Rock exposures in the Braid Glen show five successive lava flows with a total thickness of about 80 metres, all dipping (sloping) to the northeast, so that the oldest lava crops out near Hermitage House, while the youngest crops out near the Scout Bridge. Trachyte is also seen in Howe Dean.

Blackford Hill is composed of andesite in one thick lava flow about 60 metres deep. This exceptional thickness (for lava) implies either that the lava was here ponded up, or that it was close to the crater.

The field characteristics of andesite are its dark purplish grey colour, weathering reddish grey, its closely spaced joints (cracks) with smooth faces and similar flow structure to trachyte, but too fine to be readily discerned. In places the rock shows auto-brecciation (fragmentation) where, while it was still flowing in bulk, pieces of congealed crust were broken and fragmented and then incorporated into still moving flow.

Andesite is composed of similar minerals as trachyte, but with less silicon.

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Forthcoming Events...

Local Reptiles and Amphibia

Wednesday March 30th
Braid Centre, Nile Grove, 7.30 pm



Charles Montgomery will give us the benefit of his encyclopaedic knowledge of these fascinating creatures, which are surprisingly common and varied locally as well as in the wider Edinburgh area. Weather permitting, we may move on to the wetland patch afterwards to look for live amphibia, so bring a torch, stout footwear and warm clothing if you're interested.

Burn Clear Up

Sunday April 10th
Hermitage House 1pm

Rubbish in the burn is as constant as the seasons and so therefore must be our cleanups. This may seem like a thankless task, but your hard work and effort is always appreciated. Remember it's easier if you get your kids to do the hard stuff so bring them along, they'll love it. Tools, gloves, wellies / waders and safety advice are all provided. Wear strong footwear and come dressed for the weather. This event will go ahead come rain, shine or snow.

Dawn Bird Watch

To be announced

This event is not fully confirmed yet but we are hoping to host it sometime in May. Keep your eyes open for further information which will be displayed on the notice boards at the entrances to the park.

Being hard and resistant to weathering, it has been quarried on a large scale on the south side of the hill. Quarrying began in 1826 and finished in 1953. The western end of the quarry, which is still open, was worked around 1875 but the quarry face has shown remarkably little deterioration in the 130 years it has been standing. The quarry was primarily for road metal, rather than building stone. This was because the rock, being traversed by closely spaced cracks running in several directions, was impracticable to dress to shape, though it could be used for rough rubble walling. The name andesite comes from the Andes volcanoes of South America, where this is a very common rock type. Many eruptions start with an explosive phase as the initial pressure bursts and produces pyroclastic ash flows. The andesite overlies the trachyte lavas, and at its base there is a two metre thick ash beneath the andesite and above the trachyte. The only place where this can be seen is in the cliff 40 metres south of the southern end of Blackford Pond. The outcrop of this andesite- trachyte contact may be followed topographically (though concealed by scree) parallel to and a little above the park wall between Blackford Pond and Scout Bridge. Farther east it runs under Braid Burn.

Mention must be made of the Upper Old Red Sandstone rocks although they are nowhere seen, being covered by boulder clay, beneath which they crop out at the northwest of Blackford Pond, and the western end of the park beneath Braid Road. Though there are no exposures, the character of the sandstone may be seen in the walls by the allotments.

The characters of the three types of rocks, namely trachyte, andesite and sandstone, may be seen to advantage in adjacent coping stones on the park wall where it takes an abrupt bend in 'Target Hollow', 160 metres south-west of the summit of Blackford Hill. Note that the wall is built largely of andesite which can be uplifted from the adjacent scree. The sandstone blocks for the fence support show that the sandstone may be dressed neatly, unlike the lavas.

The presently open part of Blackford Quarry is divided into two bays by a steep pinnacle of rock. The western face of this, a geological fault along which earthquake movement has occurred in the remote past. Movements of the two sides grinding against each other has produced local brecciation (breaking the rock into tiny angular fragments) and locally smoothed, polished and striated faces.

On the south bank of Braid burn, 240 metres east of Hermitage House, there is a 12-metre tall trachyte crag. The rock is traversed by narrow veins of barite (barium sulphate mineral). Perhaps this encouraged a short trial adit along another vein, 70 metres farther east. It hardly needs saying that nothing came of this, the veins being altogether too trivial.

Volunteers Range follow-up.

Thank you to all the readers who responded to last edition's article on the history of Volunteering on Blackford Hill. Special thanks to: Grace Ellis, Judy Cantley and Louisa Maguire for pointing out references in historian and author Charles Smith's books 'Historic South Edinburgh Vol.1 and 2' and 'South Edinburgh in Pictures'.

Thanks also to Moira Stevenson of Scotsman Publications, for suggesting searching the Scotsman newspaper's digital archive, (obviously not wanting to be outdone by the Illustrated London News). And last but by no means least to Brian Smith for his detailed letters and information about his 'bush hat' wearing grandfather who was a member of the Edinburgh Volunteers. The information you have supplied will be passed on to Anthony Crawshaw and we will report on his response in a future edition.

THE HERMITAGE IN SNOW

*Such stillness,
And unseen, alone,
Within the night
The air had spun*

*In every place,
On bole and root,
On cockled leaf
And stalk and grass,*

*And scatheless bloom
Or crumbled meal,
Exquisite
And ethereal.*

*A breathed, pure,
Utter loveliness,
And all transfigured,
Yet each shape*

*Its own, a miracle
Of air, and less,
A vacancy
And nothingness.*

*A caul of snow,
A thickened frost,
A chill star dust
On all is sown*

*And in each place
A mantled light,
Translucent,
Frail, and delicate.*

*Here all is still,
The sky-roofed woods,
Each fastness skeined
And folded in the hill,*

*Each voice,
Each call,
And the stream stopped
And stony in its fall.*

*In each enchanted place
A web of crystal
Floats and flashes
Marvellous with ice,*

*A wilderness of light,
Where every step
In the abyss of air
Is not to walk but sleep,*

*To loosen, and to lose,
And not to see but feel
Each still
And secret paradise.*

David Burnett
Black Cygnet Press
Durham 1999

I have lived in Edinburgh most of my life and have made this city the subject of many of my pictures. My family lived in a house near Jocks Lodge, on the edge of the Queen's Park with a view across the Forth from our front window. I grew up aware of sky, weather and landscape. Which is perhaps why so many of my city views tend to be essentially landscapes. However, I think my main inspiration is light, sunlight and the low light and long

Cat Outram - Artist/Etcher

Born 1959, Nairobi, Kenya
 Family came to Scotland in 1966
 Attended Edinburgh College of Art, 1977 - 1981
 Registered as a professional Artist, 1991
 Sons born 1988 & 1994

shadows you get here in the short days of the year. Now that I live in Morningside my favorite local park is the Hermitage (and Blackford Hill just beyond it). The picture illustrated, "Further Along the Path" is a fairly recent view, done from one of the upper paths looking down into the valley. Most of my works are etchings. I joined Edinburgh Printmakers, the place where I make and print my pictures, in 1981 just after I left Art College. This is a wonderful facility and well worth a visit. There are three galleries with exhibitions throughout the year, and from one of the upper galleries there is a viewing window where you can see down into the studio where the members work. The nature of an etching lends itself to a very



'Further Along the Path' by Cat Outram.

linear, monochrome sort of an image. Perfect for winter trees, fine detail and strong light effects. You can work with colour, although it takes longer to do and can be complicated. I tend to have to work out the printing logistics before I finish the draft drawing, prior to working directly on the plate. But it is a very rewarding medium (when it works!). As well as the city, I do flower studies (Elisabeth Blackadder was one of my tutors at College) and a lot of small studies of natural objects such as stones, feathers and shells.

How an Etching is made.

First a metal plate (usually zinc or copper) is cut to size and prepared for drawing on. The drawing is done with a fine metal point. The final print is a mirror image of this drawing, so when doing specific places I have to work from a tracing of the original, turned back-to-front. The plate is then immersed in a bath of acid to etch the lines of the drawing to the required depth. There are several processes that can be used at this point to add tone and other marks to the image. Once finished the plate is cleaned and paper is prepared for the printing stage. The plate is inked up by hand, then the excess is wiped off, the edges cleaned and it is put onto the bed of the press. Dampened (very important) paper is placed on top and the whole lot is run through the rollers. On the other side, the print is peeled off and put to dry between boards. Any subsequent prints have to be individually inked up and put through the press one at a time. This, while being time-consuming, allows me to experiment with slightly different colours or effects in the way I wipe the plate. I never sell a picture I'm not happy with but there is room for variety and it keeps the process interesting for me. Finally the image is numbered, titled and signed. It's traditional to limit an edition of any one image so as to create rarity value for the customer. But some of my smaller images are uneditioned. I will go on printing them while there is a market or until the plate itself wears out.

Should you wish to see her work firsthand

Cat is currently exhibiting at **Edinburgh Printmakers until the 26 March, 23 Union Street**, near the top of Leith Walk.

She will be the featured artist throughout **April** at the **Silk Art Gallery**, run by Lynne Kerr, **Comiston Road**, Morningside.

Cat also shows at the **3D2D Craft & Design Fairs** run by Richard Green at **The Assembly Rooms, George Street**, Edinburgh.

Next dates: **19 March & 30 April** and throughout the Festival, at the outdoor venue next to Lothian Road, **5 - 27 August**.