



Hill & Hermitage

Newsletter of the Friends of the Hermitage of Braid & Blackford Hill
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Annual General Meeting: Thursday 27th October 2005

The seventh Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Hermitage of Braid and Blackford Hill will be held at 7.30 pm on Thursday 27th October at the Cluny Centre in Cluny Drive. In addition to the business part of the meeting, our own local Ranger Fergus Cook will review the past year's activities in the LNR, and there will also be a chance to meet Duncan Monteith, the newly appointed Countryside Ranger Supervisor, who will tell us about his views on cycling in the Hermitage.

Full papers for the AGM will be circulated to members nearer the time. Please support us by coming to this meeting and joining in the discussion of the state of the Friends and where we are or should be going in the future. We also suffer from a chronic shortage of active committee members, so why not consider making a contribution by allowing your name to be put forward?

From the Committee Room

Your committee is operating (but only just) without a quorum at successive meetings. Despite having a membership of no fewer than 13, we struggle along with only three or four attending each meeting, usually held every 6-8 weeks. This is particularly disappointing, since Countryside Ranger Fergus Cook cheerfully gives up his time to 'sit in' with us. Perhaps the committee can be reconstituted anew at the AGM...

We continue to be concerned about the Agassiz Rock. Two letters have been despatched to the City authorities this year regarding the loss of the nameplate, and the general air of decay surrounding this important geological site. Cllr Mackintosh shares our concern and has asked the Director of Recreation to answer our second letter, but we suspect that the problem of affixing a notice to the Rock, without damaging it, is a perennial problem. We have suggested a free-standing plinth or boulder nearby with an appropriate notice, but we are also concerned at unlicensed climbing and campfires lit beneath this milestone in the Earth's prehistory. Mike Pringle MSP has asked us to keep him informed about how we get on with this...

Your committee did not feel it could oppose Cllr Mackintosh's idea of a children's play park at the east end of the Blackford Pond area. While the area is primarily a nature reserve, this part of Edinburgh is notoriously short of children's play parks, so we have backed the Rangers' comment that the climbing equipment should be more 'rustic' in appearance. We are also concerned

about the state of the island - abandoned by the swans this year - but they have successfully raised a brood, so the island's re-establishment is not a priority at the moment.

If you don't agree with any of this, why not put yourself up for the committee at the AGM?
Sandy Mullan

RSPB
Edinburgh Area Local Group

presents

AN EVENING WITH ROY DENNIS MBE

An illustrated talk by this renowned
Consultant Conservationist, Ornithologist, Writer & Speaker

Tuesday 20 September 2005

at
7:30pm

Lindsay Stewart Lecture Theatre, Craiglockhart Campus,
Napier University, Colinton Road,
Edinburgh

Entry Fee £2 includes tea/coffee and biscuits

Bus Nos: 4, 10, & 27 stop on main road

We are happy to include friends and family

Non members welcome

The RSPB works for a healthy environment rich in birds and wildlife. It depends on the support and generosity of others to make a difference. It works with other bird and habitat conservation organisations in a global partnership called BirdLife International.

www.rspb.org.uk

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HILL & HERMITAGE

All correspondence, including articles, letters to the editor, advertising enquiries and competition entries to:

Andrew Coates
42 / 3 Morningside Road
Edinburgh EH10 4BZ
Tel. 0131 447 0370
or email:
andcoates@blueyonder.co.uk

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.

1st December 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

What, no cattle?

Observant visitors will have noted the absence of the usual summer livestock in the Midmar Paddock, with the result that the grass and flowers have grown quite high. This is not a sign of neglect but a deliberate policy on the part of the tenant Mr Bill Thomson, who has planted a large number of native wild flower seeds to enhance the beauty of the field. He does not plan to bring in cattle at all this summer, but intends to do so again next year when the flowers are better established.

Rob Elton

Friends practical work day: Sunday 2nd October

In spite of disappointing turnouts at our practical work days over the summer, we are persevering with attempts to involve the membership in the maintenance and improvement of our local environment. The next work day will be on Sunday 2nd October, starting at Hermitage House at 2.00 pm, and will concentrate on the clearing of sycamore saplings from parts of Blackford Hill. While there are a number of fine mature specimens of this tree throughout the reserve, it is not a native species and does tend to dominate and replace other attractive trees, so the overall policy is to keep its spread in check. We will be digging up the smaller saplings and lopping the larger ones, using tools from the stock at Hermitage House, so bring stout footwear and gloves if you can.

The Hermitage Doocot

Readers will recall the poor state of the Hermitage Doocot illustrated in the Winter 2004 Edition of Hill and Hermitage. The Friends were disappointed that discussions with Historic Scotland produced expressions of sympathy but no practical assistance, and we have instead focused our efforts in very helpful communications with Councillor Mark McInnes, and Morningside Community Council Treasurer, Lindsay Walls. Outline repair costs have been established, and, having first been advised that there was no funding available now, or in the foreseeable future, we are now delighted to hear that a budget residue has been identified which could allow the work to proceed this financial year. The Friends would very much like to see some improved public access into this historic structure, with some fresh interpretation but getting the roof repaired has to be the first step!

Goff Cantley

Forthcoming Events...

RSPB Edinburgh Area Local Group
An Evening With Roy Dennis
Tuesday 20th September 7.30 pm

This Illustrated Talk is being held at the Lindsay Stewart Lecture Theatre, Craiglockhart Campus, Napier University, Colinton Road, Edinburgh. Entry fee is £2 (includes tea/coffee and biscuits). You don't have to be an RSPB member to attend, family and friends are welcome.

Practical Work Day
Sunday 2nd October 2.00pm

Meet at Hermitage House. For more information see 'Friends practical work day' article above.

Friends of the Hermitage of Braid and Blackford Hill AGM
Thursday 27th October 7.30pm

Join us at the Cluny Centre in Cluny Drive. Come along and find out what we have done in the past year and have your say in what we could or should be doing in future years. This event is a perfect opportunity to join the Friends or if you are a member already stand for a committee post.