



NEWSLETTER No 68 Spring 2017

BALGREEN COMMUNITY GARDEN - what a transformation



The creation of the Balgreen Community Garden has transformed a derelict space by the Water of Leith into a great place for people and wildlife. The site includes: a native hedgerow, wildflower meadow, butterfly and bee bank, 6 raised beds, a shady woodland border complete with a willow fence, a living wall and stone bench feature.

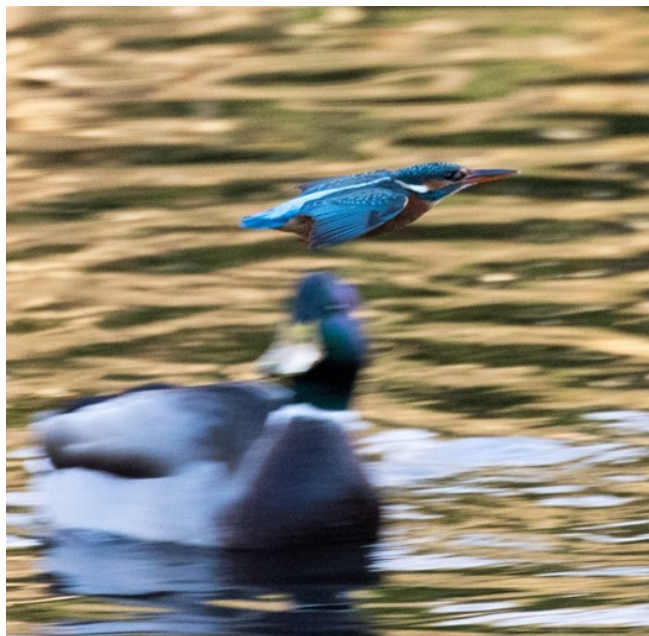
The project was funded through the Tesco Bags of Help scheme, where 5p carrier bag income amounted to £10,000 for this project. There are three striking features on the site.

The first is a living stone wall and curved bench masterfully built by volunteers with the Drystone Walling Association of South East Scotland. We thank all who took part in their creation, including young people from Youth Build who have a couple of days learning the master waller's skills. The second is the reclaimed sleeper raised beds, these were built over 3 days by volunteers from DWF and Lloyds Bank. Each was planted and adopted by local groups including The Westfield Community, Health all Around and Balgreen Primary School, who will now take on their maintenance. The final feature is the willow fence skilfully built by the Peregrines of Tiphereth.

Of course we could not have completed the project without our volunteers, who have spent many hours on the site creating habitats, filling beds and digging over the site. Our thanks also goes to the RSPB Giving Nature a Home Team for their support, the Dirty Weekenders and Wood Mackenzie for helping to finish off the project. But above all thank you to Ben McCallum for making it all happen and the many local residents who have taken this garden to their hearts. We can't wait to see what it will look like in the spring!!! Watch this video to see the transformation of the site over the past year.
https://youtu.be/JpQsfi4lb_s.

Following on from this, we are delighted to announce that we will receive another £8000 from Tesco to spend in the Dean Valley around St Bernard's Well on improving habitats, painting railings, revealing walls and rock structures and controlling damaging vegetation. Thank you to all Tesco shoppers who voted for our projects.

Birds of the Dells by Juliet Wilson



This stunning photo of the kingfisher in flight was taken by Anne Meikle

I've been a patrol volunteer for several years now. I love the variety of birdlife in the Dells. Kingfishers are iconic but elusive river birds, often all you see is a flash of turquoise as the bird speeds past. Grey herons are easier to see as they stand still for long periods, waiting for fish. Herons nest in trees so don't be surprised if you see one up in the branches! Dippers are brown and white birds that stand on rocks and dive into the water hunting invertebrates. They also have a beautiful song and, like robins, sing all year. The grey wagtail is a graceful grey and yellow bird, which Italians call *ballerina* and if you watch one dancing over the water you'll understand why! Mallards live in the Dells and in winter you sometimes see goosanders (though they prefer the river near Saughton Park).

Occasionally a cormorant appears in the Dells, though they are usually found at the Shore.

There are lots of birds in the trees too. These include well-known garden birds such as robins, blackbirds, blue tits, long tailed tits and chaffinches. Treecreepers climb up the tree trunks, well camouflaged in their brown plumage. They never climb downwards though, only nuthatches can do that and they've recently moved into the Dells. Bullfinches, the plumper pinker cousins of chaffinches hang out near the allotments. Song thrushes are still common in the Dells, despite a general decrease in numbers. They are joined here by the larger but more elusive mistle thrush, whose mournful song can sometimes be heard even in midwinter. Winter thrushes (redwings and fieldfares) sometimes visit the area too. In summer chiffchaffs, blackcaps and sometimes willow warblers join the other birds and add to the rich birdsong.

With all these small birds around it's no surprise to see birds of prey! Sparrowhawks breed in the Dells and buzzards often fly over, I used to see peregrines too. A few years ago, a tawny owl regularly sat in a hole in a tree near the path, though now jackdaws nest there. And you never know what might appear. A ring necked parakeet recently appeared near Redhall Gardens!

Juliet Wilson is a patrol volunteer for the trust. She also leads guided walks for the City of Edinburgh Adult Education Programme. Birdwatching walks start Monday 20 February (details here <https://www.joininedinburgh.org/activity/10761/>) and Highlights of the Water of Leith starts February 22 February (details here <https://www.joininedinburgh.org/activity/10768/>)

Harmeny Athletic Club donate £300 after Half Marathon Event

Back on 4th December Harmeny Athletic Club ran the '7 Reservoirs Half Marathon' Event - 95 runners took part and we are delighted to be one of the charities they have supported with proceeds of the event. Darren Cavaroli popped along to the Visitor Centre to drop in the £300 donation and is pictured with Helen Brown, Trust Manager. Thank you to all the runners.

Harmeny Athletic Club is based in Balerno, just outside Edinburgh on the edge of the Pentland Hills. The Junior section caters for young athletes from 9 – 16 but older ages are welcome. The Adult section, called Harmeny Pentland Runners, provides a wide range of opportunities to join runners of all abilities.

Visit their website for more information <http://harmenyac.org/>



What's On This Spring

Guided River Walks

Places on these walks will be limited so please call / email to reserve your space. £5 (members £2) 0131 455 7367. Meet at the Water of Leith Visitor Centre at 2.00pm. Walk of up to 2 miles, mainly on paths. Wear warm clothes and walking boots or sturdy shoes.

Sunday 2nd April

Geological Walk - Slateford and the Dells
with Beverly Bergman, Edinburgh Geological Society

The geology of the Water of Leith forms the foundation for its character, shaping it into an important source of both water power and building stone. This walk in the Dells will provide an opportunity to see many of its geological features including Carboniferous sedimentary rocks, glacial features and fossils as well as the site of Redhall Castle.

Sunday 23rd April – Our Herbal Heritage

Following on from her popular winter presentation Anna Canning of Floramedica will take us on a spring time forage into the Dells to explore the wealth of edible and medicinal plants on our doorstep. We will delve into their history, lore and use both past and present.

CHILDREN'S EVENTS at the Visitor Centre £5 per child (2-4.00pm)

**BOOKING ESSENTIAL : 0131 455 7367
or admin@waterofleith.org.uk**

Tuesday 4th April – **SURVIVE!!**

Water, Food, Shelter and Fire are the keys to survival, learn new skills from our 'wild' leaders

Thursday 6th April - **River Dipping**

Join us IN the river for this favourite activity

Tues 11th April - **MUD!!**

Wear your wellies its gonna be squelchy, as we explore mud and yes that means pies and faces

Sunday 9th April – **River Clean Up**

Join our volunteer team for this river clean up day, wear old clothes. Meet at 10.00am at the Water of Leith Visitor Centre. FREE

Saturday 6th May - **Plant Sale Fundraising Event** 10.00 am – 2pm

Visit our now famous annual plant sale and pick up a bargain. Doors open at 10.00am at the Visitor Centre. 50p admission donation.

Saughton Park Restoration Project by Pete McDougall

Saughton Park Development Officer

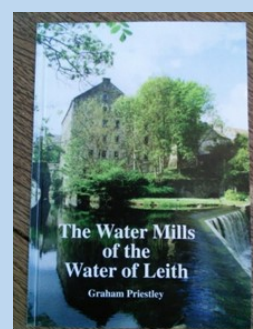


The detailed designs for the park have been completed and in February 'invitations to tender' will be issued to contractors. The successful contractors will be appointed by the start of June with work to commence shortly afterwards and running for approximately 12 months. Included are plans for a network of off-road 'active travel' routes running through the park and along the Water of Leith. We are working with Sustrans to encourage pedestrian and cycle traffic, to help increase the number of 'Quiet Routes' which run across Edinburgh. Seating areas will be incorporated around the whole path network, some with fitness trail equipment to complement the outdoor gym area. By the river there will be a new viewing area near the planned micro-hydro scheme at the weir. The exciting designs are available to view on our website www.edinburgh.gov.uk/saughtonpark and in the Winter Garden.

Community events and activities will continue in the park right up until the contractors begin work in July, so there are lots of things to look forward to at Saughton such as 'Disco Soup' on Saturday 25 March from 12-6pm. Visit www.friendsofsaughtonpark.org/ for details of what's on. For further information contact Pete on 0131 529 4876

"The Water Mills of the Water of Leith"

- back in print!



**Copies from the
Visitor Centre
priced £5.99**

Planning Caseload

It seems to us that the property market must be on its way back up as the number of proposed developments along the river is growing at an alarming rate. One of the biggest threats to retaining the beauty and character of the Water of Leith corridor is property development and while we are not against appropriate development of brownfield sites along the river, there have been many causes for concern lately.

In the upper sections plans for 53 flats on the old tannery and bank mill site in Balerno are likely to go ahead and the huge development at Kinleith Mill nears completion with its controversial changes to linking paths to the walkway. 5 new homes are also proposed for just downstream of the Blinkbonny bridge. The former Splash Bathroom warehouse conversion is now complete but what of the rest of the old Woodhall Mill site? In Slateford, we are delighted to report that the plans for 247 bed student flats on the site of the Blue Goose and Westside Motors has been rejected, only to be swiftly followed by an application for just the car lot (an eye sore on the river we will be pleased to see the back of). Further downstream work has started on a huge 157 unit development between the Murrayburn at Longstone and the Prison. Then all is quiet bar the odd small development until we get to Canonmills and Warriston road, where we have been battling against two four storey blocks of flats and we are looking closely at the plans to put 180 properties on the old B&Q site.

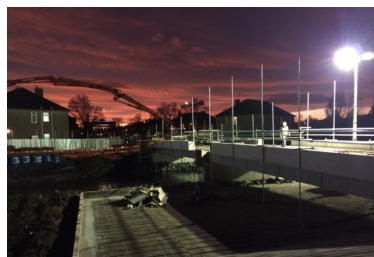
In Bonnington we are expecting plans for more housing on the former mill site off Newhaven road. And finally after a wait of 7 years, building is soon to start on a development at West Bowling Green Street. This section of the river has long been an eyesore and the new complex will extend the walkway round the final flowing bend in the river – truly completing the walkway – we cannot wait to see this one complete.

If you spot a development along the river which gives you cause for concern please contact Helen Brown – Trust Manager.

Flood Prevention Works Update

by Eleana Caldwell

McLaughlin & Harvey Ltd



To date piling works for the flood walls have been completed across the entire project. Masonry works are complete at Roseburn Park, Riversdale Crescent and Riversdale Road with works ongoing to the rear of the properties on Corstorphine Road, Baird Grove and Pansy Walk. The earth embankments to the west entrance of Roseburn Park, by the play area, have been completed with just some final finishing of the footpath required.

The new Bridge on Baird Drive is near completion and will be open for emergency access shortly. There are seven flood gates being installed across the project and the installation of the flood gates on the Ice Rink Bridge at Riversdale Crescent is underway and will be completed prior to the demolition of Saughtonhall Avenue Bridge, which is due to commence w/c 6th February. Demolition is estimated to take around 8 weeks and installation works for the new bridge will begin once the piling works have been completed towards the end of March 2017.

The project is on schedule for completion in January 2018. We are hoping to have some sections of the walkway open prior to this, in particular Pansy Walk but at this stage no definite dates are available.

Any enquiries regarding the project contact :

- enquiries.waterofleith@mclh.co.uk
- Telephone - 028 9034 1420

How to join the Water of Leith Conservation Trust - Complete the form and post payment to the address below or visit www.waterofleith.org.uk/join and join through our PayPal account

Individual membership	£16	Concession (retired, student, unemployed)	£10
Family	£30	Group (schools and voluntary bodies)	£32

Name..... Date.....

Address.....

Email..... Tel No.....

Please post to:

Trust Administrator, Water of Leith Visitor Centre, 24 Lanark Road, Edinburgh, EH14 1TQ

www.waterofleith.org.uk admin@waterofleith.org.uk 0131 455 7367 @WOLCT Registered Charity SC000015