



## NEWSLETTER No 73 Summer 2019

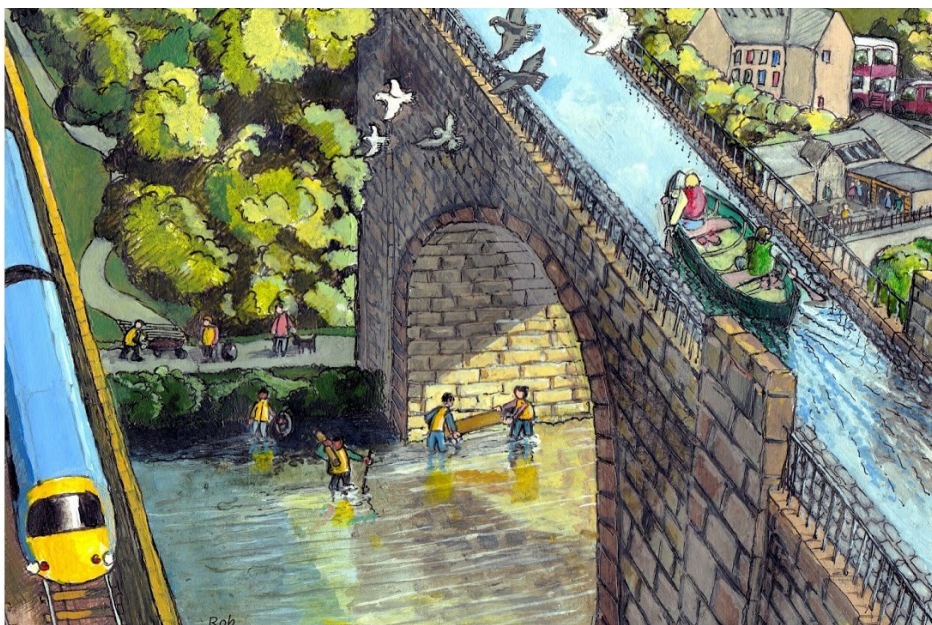
### Our 30<sup>th</sup> Year proves to be the busiest on record as volunteer hours top 10,700

2018/19 was a landmark year for the Trust as we celebrated our 'Pearl Anniversary' but it has also proven to be remarkable for a number of other reasons. Each year we collect information about the groups who visit us and the work our volunteers do and on calculating last year's statistics a wonderful pattern emerged. We were smashing all our targets!

Learning is at the core of what we do and our Outdoor Learning Officer, Ruth (supported by the staff team) delivered sessions to 125 classes of children from schools across the city. Over 2700 pupils in total, a 16% increase on 2017/18.

During the year we had a number of interesting projects which engaged large numbers of children including working with Forthview, St Josephs and Balgreen primary schools on special outdoor fundays. We also extended our work on field studies, with 20 High Schools now using our services

Our Volunteer Team are a remarkable bunch. At the Visitor Centre they clocked up a huge 3493 hours, the equivalent of nearly 2 full time members of staff. Out on the river, during tasks and on patrols, they clocked up a record breaking 3791 hours, 41% more than last year. This increase is largely due to having Sandra on board to help Charlotte deliver more tasks, a record 123 in total.



Youth and Community Group tasks also took a big leap forward rising by 37% to 89 tasks, achieving around 3500 hours. This rise is due to our almost weekly visits from the Peregrine Group of adults with learning difficulties and autism who came 40 times and completed many projects including making some fabulous willow fences. We also delivered a record 28 tasks with youth groups.

In all we delivered 435 volunteer tasks, learning days and events attended by over 6700 people and volunteers clocked up a record 10,747 hours

## Legacies help to build a more secure future for the Trust

In the last year or two the Trust has been the very grateful recipient of a number of generous legacies. A recent bequest has enabled the Trustees to think more strategically about investing in the future of the river and the organisation, hopefully creating a more sustainable future. This has become especially important with cuts in Local Authority and Government funding. We do strive to find new income streams and to develop the resources we have to help sustain our work and legacies are a very valuable addition to that.

The Trustees and Staff have decided to use the latest legacy of over £200,000 in a number of ways to spread its benefits over a period of years:

- ♦ *a proportion will be invested for the longer term to provide a regular income and to give some protection against inflation*
- ♦ *each year some will be used for projects along the river and some on much needed upgrades to the Visitor Centre. Some necessary maintenance work on the Centre has already been completed this winter but we intend to turn our attention to the café, shop and foyer area later in the year. The aim will be to create interesting interpretation displays for visitors and to provide better refreshments for walkers and users. Increasing our onsite sales could be a bonus*
- ♦ *we also have in action a plan to reduce our carbon footprint and electricity bills by converting our lighting to more energy efficient LED units and improving the buildings insulation*



Image by James Hopkins

But our ambitions do not stop there. We are in the process of producing a new Business Plan for the Trust and, in the coming months, a Management Plan for the river as a whole. We would really appreciate your input to our plans. What projects would you like to see on the river? Which areas could really use some TLC and/or investment? During 2019 we will be looking at the river to see where best we could target our efforts. You will, hopefully, have seen the difference projects such as Graham's Garden and the Balgreen Community Garden make to rejuvenating run-down places by the river. Where should we transform next? We will of course continue our offensive on rubbish and invasive species but what other projects would you like to see our volunteer teams turning their attention to?

Finally, legacies can be transformative for charities and so perhaps you could consider a bequest in your Will to The Water of Leith Conservation Trust and thus help us to build a secure future for the river.

### **'There and Back Again' Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2019**

#### **Water of Leith Walk Challenge 26 miles, 15 miles or 11 miles** ***Explore Edinburgh's hidden natural asset & help raise funds to protect it***

Fancy a challenge for the summer – why not register for our 'There and Back Again' Sponsored Walk.

#### **There are 3 options:**

**A: All the way 'There & Back Again' - 26 miles** meeting at 9.00am at the Water of Leith Visitor Centre, walking to Leith and back, then heading up to Balerno and back to the centre (approx 9 hours)

**B: Leith 'There & Back Again' - 15 miles** meeting at 9.00am at the Water of Leith Visitor Centre, walking to Leith and back. (approx 5 hours)

**C: Balerno 'There & Back Again' - 11 miles** meeting at 2.00pm at the Water of Leith Visitor Centre, walking to Balerno and back. (approx 4 hours)

To register email [admin@waterofleith.org.uk](mailto:admin@waterofleith.org.uk) for a form and walk for free by collecting sponsorship yourself or using our event page on Just Giving.

If you prefer not to raise sponsorship you can register for just £15 each – Option B and C only. Joining instructions will be forwarded nearer the event.



## Guided Walks Historical Heartlands of the River

### Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> August – 2.00pm Leith

The mouth of the river has a long and often turbulent history. Join us for a trip back in time. Meeting at the Coburg St Carpark near Great Junction St Bridge £5 (members £2)

### Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> September – 2.00pm Dean Valley

The industrial heart of the river dates back to 11C. Join us for a trip back in time along the Dean Valley from Roseburn to Stockbridge. Meeting on the old Coltbridge off Corstorphine Road £5 (members £2)

### BOOKING ESSENTIAL

## Spring Clean-ups are underway



Our annual spruce up of the river began on 31<sup>st</sup> March with a phenomenal turnout of 125 people over 2 clean-ups at Slateford and Saughton. In the morning our volunteers, cubs, cadets and the public joined forces at the centre where we collected, sorted and recycled a BIG pile of rubbish. Thank you to our local Sainburys and ASDA store for the donation of food for lunches. The afternoon saw the Geocachers 'Cache in Trash Out' task at Saughton where a further 50 folk gave up their Sunday to help tidy this section. Since then we have cleaned at Leith, Coltbridge and Colinton, with Dean Village and Stockbridge happening on 2<sup>nd</sup> June.

## Dangling Doggie Doos



The latest littering crime along the walkway is dumped or discarded poo bags. Over the last few years we have seen a steady rise in this FOUL fouling of our river. Some is deliberately bagged and chucked in the river, often it is left to be collected (or forgotten) later.

Recently 23 bagged and dumped poops were photographed over a distance of only three miles and that was without searching too hard. This was in spite of there being 3 bins accessible from the walkway.

While we accept it would be useful to have a bin in the the Kinleith area near the new estate (a particular black spot) and around Currie Kirk - something we will be working on with City of Edinburgh Council -this is simply not an excuse and **carrying poo is part of the responsibility of dog ownership**. Some of the poop has been hidden, thrown and caught on a branch, tucked away, but often just left in plain sight in blue or purple bags. One particular poop was clearly in sight of a bin and a 'no dog fouling' sign near the city bypass. We have asked our river patrol volunteers to record the amount they see along the river so we can work out where the worst spots are. One volunteer collected 32 bags of poop on patrol Currie to Balerno. It seems to be much worse in the more rural parts of the river – less people to see you dumping perhaps.

Help us keep the river and walkway clean.  
**Dog owners bag it and bin it!!**

## 'Spiling' Project creates living banks

Late 2018 our volunteers were introduced to the ancient art of spiling. This is a soft engineering technique to reduce river bank erosion. Freshly cut willow posts are driven into the river bed and thinner material is woven horizontally between them. Then the area behind is backfilled with soil for the willow posts to root into. Sounds easy doesn't it? In practice it's a pretty tricky thing to undertake - the river bed is quite often compacted and the posts are more organically shaped than the saw-milled variety, so getting them into the ground is the biggest challenge. Initially we sourced our own material, cutting posts and weaving material from the river, but as time became short (this all has to be done whilst willow is dormant) we bought willow in from a specialist supplier. The two areas we selected for treatment were Tanfield and below Donaldson's Path. Both these areas get heavy use from dogs getting in and out of the water to the point where they are bare of vegetation and sections of the bank have slipped away. If we can get our willow posts to establish at these spots we reduce sedimentation into the river but also create additional habitat for our native fauna. Initial signs are good as by late April the first signs of willow posts sprouting were visible. We will monitor how well our first spiling attempts take with a view to making this a regular resource in our conservation toolbox.

## Where does the wild trout spawn?

Over the next few weeks you might see some roving volunteers out on the river working in pairs to survey the quality of the river for fish habitat. In mid-April we trained a small crew of people to help us with this survey.

The methodology we are using was created by the Scottish Fisheries Co-ordination Centre. On the training day we ran through the recording form and the protocol with an indoor and an outdoor session. The methodology requires one person to be wading the river and the other to be on the bank filling in the data on the recording form. The sort of thing we are recording is water level and flow, substrate size and compactness, bank side vegetation type, pollution points and obstacles. The information will be digitized by Bryn Macaulay, one of our regular volunteers, as part of his MSc thesis. Scottish Water is preparing to upgrade their Combined Sewage Outflows between Slateford and Balerno so this information is particularly pertinent as we need to know where actual and potential spawning habitats are so we can protect them. In early November when brown trout are spawning we will go back out looking for active trout redds and map these as well.



*Survey of the river in action*

Thanks to Tony from the Annan Fishery Trust for his time training Charlotte and Sandra so we could get this ball rolling and thanks to all the volunteers who have put their hand up to help with this project.

## River News Round up

- Colinton Tunnel is going to be getting a much needed make over. This exciting project will restore and re-imagine existing tunnel art in order to preserve local history and make people smile. It will also turn a dark and slightly forbidding tunnel into a safe and welcoming home for Scotland's largest historical mural, celebrating the industrial, social, artistic and literary history of the Colinton Community. A multi-skilled team of muralists led by Edinburgh-based Chris Rutterford have been appointed to develop the design and deliver the mural.
- Fishing Season is now in full swing until 30<sup>th</sup> September and free permits are available from the centre along with a great new leaflet about fishing the Water of Leith. We even sell hand-tied flies.
- The Ocean Mist is to get a new lease of life as a floating hotel. Originally built as a mine sweeper/fishing trawler, the boat spent most of her working life as a luxury steam yacht on the Caledonian Canal, finally retiring in the 1960s to become a floating restaurant in Leith. After years of neglect it will be great to see her restored.
- Gormley Statues – after an 8 year absence it looks like the '6 Times' project will become 6 again rather than just 2 as the four damaged statues return to the river.

**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](http://www.waterofleith.org.uk/join) and join through our PayPal account

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

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

Address.....

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

**Post to: Trust Administrator, Water of Leith Visitor Centre, 24 Lanark Road, Edinburgh, EH14 1TQ**

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