

Report on the Year

Annual General Meeting April 2014

We were delighted to be returning to the newly refurbished lecture theatre in the Royal Botanic Garden and were pleased to see an increased attendance. The meeting was chaired by Ali Gordon, who has kindly stepped into the role for a year until we have elected a new Chair from the Committee.

Following the AGM business we were pleased to welcome Jeff Sanders who gave an illustrated talk about the work of the new organisation, Friends of Warriston Cemetery. We were most interested to hear about the work of the volunteers, who seem to be energised by FOWC, and that they had applied to the Lottery for funding of a professional Conservation Management Plan (CMP). The CMP will ensure the preservation, conservation and sympathetic restoration of Warriston Cemetery, while conserving and augmenting the native flora and fauna within this important urban wildlife environment.

Committee members

Jim Henderson and Isla Duncan were voted onto the Committee following their co-option earlier in the year. Gus Schwarz has resigned due to the pressure of other commitments.

Inverleith Society Website

Take a look at www.inverleith-society.org.uk, our website. We are grateful to Alexander McNeil for his ongoing contribution, but intend to make further improvements. We would welcome assistance from anyone with appropriate expertise. Please get in touch.

Social Evenings

This year we have arranged two new venues for the Inverleith Social Evenings. The summer party was held in the Deans' house in Inverleith Terrace and we were most intrigued to see Marcus Dean's ambitious renovation of the former Church of Scotland Training College. We are grateful to Marcus and Arabella and their children who so kindly welcomed us to their home. The highlight of the winter months was the winter party in Jim Henderson's book-lined flat in Inverleith Place with its stunning views of the skyline of Edinburgh. Jim's warm welcome and splendid flat was much appreciated by the guests. A big thank you to Jim.

Other News

Many Inverleithers will be pleased the flood prevention works are now completed, and as we write work has started on the tennis courts beside the bowling club at Warriston Playing Fields.

Simon Milne, the new Keeper of The Royal Botanic Gardens, has kindly agreed to give a talk at our AGM on Monday 20 April 2015.

The re-erection of the original 'Botanic Cottage', relocated to the RGE from Leith Walk, has been greeted by those who live very locally with some dismay, but for those unaffected by the development, it will be a fascinating reconstruction of the past.

Following several attempts by the Committee and local residents to get the City Council to repair the damaged gatepost at the Inverleith Row entrance to Warriston Playing Fields we are pleased to report this work has been prioritised by our local councillor, Lesley Hinds.

Bobbie Fraser

Marian McIntyre

Treasurer's Report January 2015

The past year has been relatively uneventful for the Society's accounts. As ever, the efforts and generosity of sponsors and members (new and long-standing) keep us in the black. The work of the current, and the last couple, of Membership Secretaries to boost the number of 'standing order' payments has greatly simplified the job of keeping track of your funds, so my thanks this year extend beyond members and sponsors to include our hard-working Membership Secretaries.

Relative to previous years, our expenditure and income have both grown slightly and by approximately the same amount to leave our balances largely unchanged. The most unusual expense this year was a 'behind-the-scenes' rebuild of the website. While we have kept the same general style the site is now very much easier to maintain and update (www.inverleith-society.org.uk). Details of this expense, as well as all other income and expenditure, will be available for scrutiny at the AGM on 20 April 2015.

Every so often our bankers get in touch to tinker with the way our accounts operate. The current account has a cheque book and the savings account has a rather tattered blue 'passbook'. It seems that both these systems are rather too antiquated for RBS and so this year they attempted to move us to accounts with plastic bank-cards, only to realise that our accounts were both so very old that they cannot be altered using their automated systems! For now we shall continue to enjoy the tried and tested methods of banking; it seems that being rather long-in-the-teeth can reap unexpected rewards.

Graeme Cook

Membership Secretary's Report

In an effort to increase our membership we delivered invitations to last year's AGM to members and non members within the Inverleith Conservation area. We also offered one year's free membership to new members. The invitations and free membership offer only resulted in two new members. Having taken over the post of Membership Secretary in May 2014 I would welcome any ideas from members on how to increase our membership. Membership numbers remain steady at 146.

In the meantime my focus has been on trying to persuade members to switch to standing order payments which saves having to process cheques and cash and chase up non payers. I am also attempting to obtain email addresses as this is a much cheaper method of contacting members than by Royal Mail. This mailing will therefore be emailed to all members for whom we hold an email address. Those members paying by standing order where no email address is held will also receive a form asking for that information.

However please be assured that we will always send postings by mail where necessary so the lack of a computer will not impinge on your membership.

The best method of encouraging new members is to ask members to bring along a newcomer to the AGM, which is to be held on 20 April 2015. Please gather up your neighbours and bring them along.

The task of Membership Secretary actually takes up far more of my time than I anticipated. Hopefully this will reduce in the future as members switch to standing order payment and I obtain email addresses. I would like to express my thanks to the previous Membership Secretary, Marian McIntyre, for all her efforts on our behalf and for the help she has given me.

Isla Duncan

Planning Issues

The Committee continues to play an active role in relation to planning issues which have the potential to affect the character and amenity of the Inverleith Conservation Area. We monitor all planning applications submitted to the Council for developments in or affecting the Conservation Area. In 2014 we reviewed 45 applications and submitted comments or objections on 8 of these. (For comparison, in 2013 we reviewed 42 applications and submitted comments or objections on 6.)

In addition, we monitor any apparent breaches of planning control requesting enforcement action by the Council where necessary.

We also review planning policy proposals from the City Council where these have the potential to impact on the Conservation Area. In 2014 this included providing comments on the Council's proposed revision of the key policy document which describes the characteristics of the Inverleith Conservation Area which planning decisions are required to take into account (the review process and the comments submitted on behalf of the Society are summarised in a separate article).

The most significant planning cases on which we submitted objections or comments in 2014 were as follows:

9-11 Kinnear Road (residential development including conversion of the former Edinburgh Academy boarding houses and construction of three new apartment blocks). The Society objected to proposals submitted by the developer for changes to details of the scheme which had previously been consented by the Council involving an increase in the height of the new infill blocks; changes to the facade design and materials for the new blocks; and additional vehicle access points. The Council refused permission for the last of these but gave consent for the design changes.

5 Warriston Place (development involving demolition of the existing historic structure, currently occupied by a print company 'Rayprographics', construction of a 3 storey block with 10 flats and underground parking). Although the site is just outside the Conservation Area the Society objected to the proposed development on the grounds that it would have a negative impact on the character of the Conservation Area and on local amenity; and that the design does not meet Council's adopted design policies by ignoring the local context and the potential for incorporating the historic structure in any new development, while contributing nothing to local amenity. The Council have yet to take a decision on this scheme.

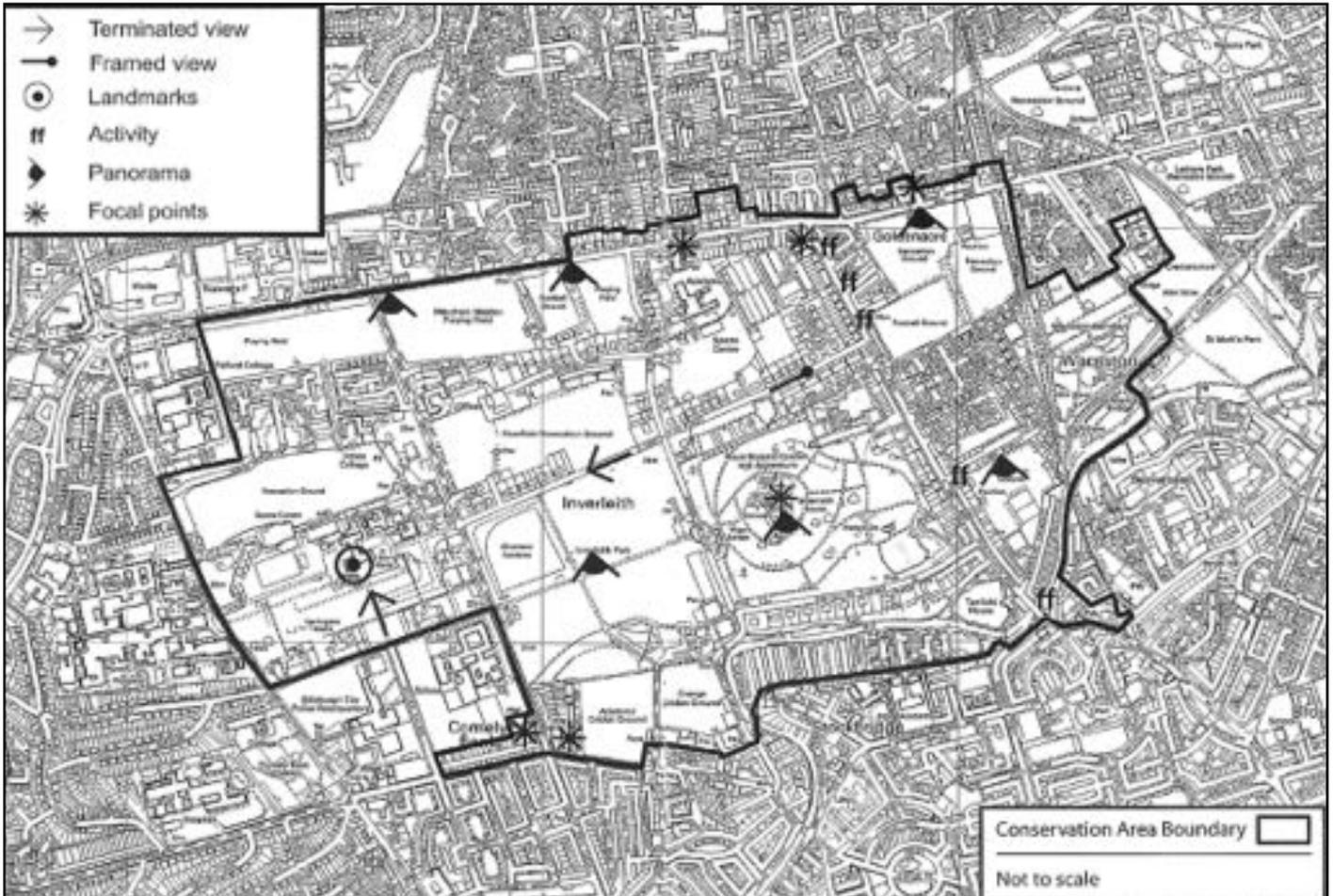
1 Canonmills Bridge (redevelopment of building and site currently occupied by 'Earthy' to provide new retail units at street level with residential development above and to the rear). The Council gave consent to an earlier application for this development in spite of objections from the Society and others. We re-iterated our objections when this application was submitted proposing variations to the first scheme, on the grounds that the scheme would involve serious over-development of the site and that the design conflicts with the character of the Conservation Area. The Council rejected the latest application but at the time of writing it remains unclear whether the development will proceed on the basis of the consent which was secured for the earlier scheme.

42 Inverleith Place (modifications to front garden to provide additional car parking; changes to boundary walls and gates). The Society objected to the paving of the former front garden area, the use of timber boundary fences and the increase in width of the gates, all of which we considered conflicted with the character of the Conservation Area. The Council supported our view and rejected the proposal for paving the front garden area and approved a revised scheme involving the use of traditional pattern iron railings and gates.

20 Inverleith Terrace Lane (construction of a new dwelling adjoining the existing house). The Society objected to the scheme on the grounds that the design conflicts the character of the Conservation Area and does not comply with the Council's design and housing development policies; and that it will result in increased traffic on Inverleith Terrace Lane. The Council approved the application.

Ian Hooper

City Council Review of the Inverleith Conservation Area



Map courtesy of:
City Development Department: Planning and Strategy
City of Edinburgh Council

During 2014 the City Council initiated a review of the 'Character Appraisal' for the Inverleith Conservation Area. This is a key document in determining whether development proposals are compatible with the character of the Conservation Area. It describes: the key characteristics of the green spaces and built environment which the conservation area designation is intended to protect; and the control and regulatory measures available to the Council.

The Society provided comments to the Review Team covering a number of issues as described below. There will be a further opportunity to submit comments when the Council publishes a consultation draft of the Character Appraisal in Spring this year.

The area currently covered by the Conservation Area designation is shown on the map. The Stockbridge Colonies were removed from the Inverleith Conservation Area boundary in 2013 to form a separate conservation area. The Society has proposed that the designated area should be further reduced to help ensure that conservation policies are more strongly focussed on the historic core of the Inverleith area. Our suggestions are that the following should be excluded from the Conservation Area – the Werberside and Rocheid Park developments North of Fettes College; the Ettrickdale/Liddesdale development on Glenogle Road; the Warriston Drive and Eildon Terrace area; the buildings along the North edge of Ferry Road. The Council's present proposals would exclude the last of these.

The Society has also made the case for the document to set out conservation objectives for the area with much more clarity and precision so that it can be more effective in preventing inappropriate developments or alterations. In addition, we would like to see more emphasis on the importance of streets and street frontages which we see as vital to the character and amenity of the area and the quality of life for residents and businesses; coupled with a stronger indication that the Council will implement policies which will lead to improved management and design of the major streets in the area.

Across the Conservation Area less than 30% of land is in private ownership; the remaining 70% is controlled by 6 public or independent institutions. The Council's present proposals do usefully include adoption of a policy requiring any development proposals by these large institutions to be set within the context of a master plan for the long-term use of the site.

Information about the consultation will be available on the Council's website. In addition, we will keep members informed about the progress of the consultation.

Ian Hooper

Stockbridge and Inverleith Community Council

The Community Council (SandICC) provides a forum for discussion of a variety of issues of local concern. The Inverleith Society is represented on the Council. SandICC can provide a valuable mechanism for highlighting issues of local concern and is consulted on a wide range of topics but it does not have any executive responsibilities. In addition to significant planning cases, regular topics for Community Council discussion include local licensing applications, traffic management, environmental and policing issues.

Meetings are open to all and are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7 pm in Stockbridge Church, Saxe Coburg Street. Other attendees at the meetings include the four City Councillors who represent Inverleith Ward and Police.

In 2014 items discussed at the Community Council included the City Council's proposals for introducing a 20 mph speed limit across most of the City. The Community Council shares the Society's concern that some additional physical measures will be required in order to secure a reduction in traffic speeds on the wide thoroughfares of East Fettes Avenue, Inverleith Terrace and Inverleith Place.

Their web site address is: www.stockbridgeandinverleithcc.moonfruit.com

Ian Hooper

Friends of Inverleith Park

Early February produced great excitement in the reed beds of Inverleith pond when a Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*) put in an appearance. Twitchers soon got to know about this, producing a continuous stream of enthusiasts, each with a longer lens than the last. It is a secretive little bird, normally skulking in dense vegetation. The ice, however, meant that it could venture out to take short cuts to potential food sources. It is rarely seen in Scotland and this one may be a winter visitor. Anyway, it has given many people a lot of pleasure.

Tony Cook



Allotment owners in sympathy with Beatrix Potter's Mr McGregor?

The Inverleith allotments have become over-run with rabbits this summer – the holders tried to catch them with traps to release in the wild and caught just one rabbit! The Council sent an expert marksman who carefully managed to shoot three. See <http://www.scotsman.com/news/environment/fury-as-marksman-shoots-for-allotment-rabbits-1-3633358>. There are lots now in burrows and under sheds, wolfing just about everything in sight - many have lost at least 60 % of attempted plantings - plants only survive surrounded by fine chicken wire. A firm from Hawick are dealing with this 'infestation' by catching them and releasing them in the country. Does anyone have an alternative solution? It is imperative they are removed completely by March or so! Mr McGregor of course got his revenge by eating rabbit pie!

Pam Barnes www.inverleithpark.co.uk

Friends of Rocheid Path

The Friends of Rocheid Path was formed to give users of the path an opportunity to have some input into the restoration of the path following completion of the flood defence works and to the future general maintenance of the path. We hope to be involved in decisions affecting the path and are keen to represent the views of those who use the path regularly. There is a small committee which meets as and when required. Various local amenity groups are represented on that committee, including the Inverleith Society, the Colonies Residents' Association and the Friends of Inverleith Park. Anyone who would like to join us would be most welcome.

Volunteer sessions happen every second Sunday from 10am till 2pm. Check the noticeboard to see when the next one is planned. A small band of volunteers tackles a variety of jobs, cutting back ivy and self seeded saplings, planting bulbs, filling sacks with litter picked up along the path. Overgrown laurel has been cut back and the volunteers aim to keep new growth under control.

If you would like to get involved and help restore the path to its former glory, please get in touch. To find out more about what is going on, and have your say in the future of the Rocheid Path, please add your name to our emailing list by emailing: therocheidpath@gmail.com. This year we have asked Friends to pay a subscription: £5 for a year, £40 for life. We have a small but enthusiastic membership, which we hope will grow. Do join us.

Josie Inwood

View from Inverleith House

You can imagine Jim Henderson 's surprise when he spotted this painting in an antique shop opposite HMS Victory in Portsmouth. Recognising the view was from in front of Inverleith House he felt he just had to buy it! On his return to Edinburgh he did some research on the artist and discovered she was the well travelled Victorian artist Constance Fredrica Gordon-Cumming, 1837 – 1924. Between 1868 – 1880 she had a sustained bout of travelling in various parts of the world, particularly Asia and the south Pacific. In the 1880s she achieved distinction as a productive author and a skilled painter of watercolour landscapes. She returned to Britain where her work was widely exhibited, particularly in Missionary Exhibitions, but unfortunately she was unable to create a permanent exhibition of her work due to lack of funds. Born in Morayshire, she eventually returned to Scotland and died in Crieff in 1924.



The Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh

The Botanic Cottage Reborn



In Autumn 2015 the newest building at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) will also be the oldest, when work is complete on the reconstructed Botanic Cottage. Originally the home of the head gardener when RBGE was located on Leith Walk in the late 18th century, the cottage had fallen into disrepair by the early 21st century, and was threatened with demolition. A community campaign saved it from destruction, and discovered that this humble cottage was actually designed by two of the leading architects of Georgian Edinburgh – John Adam and James Craig – and contained one of the oldest surviving classrooms of the Scottish Enlightenment, where medical students would come to study botany. The cottage has been moved stone by stone across the city, and work began in September 2014 to rebuild this little house in the Demonstration Garden at the RBGE, creating a new hub for community and education use in the Garden.

Using traditional construction materials and techniques, we are aiming to be as true to the original methods as possible. Throughout the build, we are offering opportunities to groups of apprentices to visit the site and see the work up close, whilst also undertaking a range of other activities to raise awareness of this unique project.

We plan for the public to be able to use the cottage from Autumn 2015, exactly 250 years after it was first completed. As well as being a space for us to develop our school and community programmes, the building will be a non-commercial space in the Garden, somewhere local community groups can book rooms for talks, workshops and other activities in the inspiring surroundings of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.

If you are interested in making use of the Botanic Cottage, or would like to find out more, please contact Sutherland Forsyth.

Follow the latest developments on Twitter: @BotanicCottage

Sutherland Forsyth

Botanic Cottage Community Engagement Co-ordinator
s.forsyth@rbge.ac.uk

At our AGM on 20 April there will be a talk by Simon Milne, Regius Keeper RBGE.

**'What is going on at the Botanic?
An insight into the work and achievements
of your local Botanic Garden'**

Friends of Warriston Cemetery

At Warriston Cemetery the work of the Friends continues – as do our enjoyment and the discoveries which await us!

For example, in September, from within an enormous tangle of brambles, ivy and a dead tree there emerged the gravestone of Sir Robert Rowand Anderson (1834-1921), the eminent architect who was instrumental in the foundation of the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland in 1916. The inset panel proved to be in excellent condition, showing a girl sat upon Jesus' knee. The first person interred had been Sir Robert Rowand Anderson's only child, Annie Ross, who had died in 1872 at the tender age of 7 years. It's now visible across the Section, from beside the War Memorial, and on the reverse, it is flanked by two intentionally-planted winter-flowering viburnum trees. Previously we could only point to the thicket and say, 'In there, somewhere!'



Patrick Neill's gravestone, a beautiful piece by McGlashen of Canonmills, while no longer complete, is now clearly visible – visible also from the bridge off the end of Eildon Street.

Our vision is that Warriston Cemetery will be a place to be proud of, where the history and environment are safeguarded and promoted for the enjoyment of all, where both the biodiversity and the cultural heritage are augmented. So while part of our aim is to have every stone visible and legible, no matter who is commemorated, it's an extra thrill if the stone itself turns out to be exceptional, or if the person or persons beneath prove to have had especially interesting lives. Their stories, when researched, add to our knowledge of Edinburgh's rich heritage. Who remembers now, for instance, that there was a Balmoral Hotel in Princes Street, long before the grand edifice of 1903 above Waverley Station? Or that there was a circus opposite Surgeons' Hall?

We discovered that Services of Remembrance were no longer held at the War Memorial, so we resolved to reinstate these annually. And so, in November 2014, we purchased our own poppy wreath and invited the Rev. Joanne Foster of Inverleith St Serf's Church to conduct such a service. After the two-minute silence a piper played the delicate lament, *Neuve Chapelle*. About 40 people attended the service, not only our members and volunteers, but also Cllr Iain Whyte and his wife, some Cub Scouts, neighbours and regular walkers, some of whom laid their own tributes to accompany the Friends' wreath. The Council's cemetery crew played their part also, by ensuring the day before that the paths to the Memorial were swept of slippery fallen leaves.

The Cub Scouts had come previously to do some work which counts towards their badges, and they too loved exposing the long-lost stones, discovering names, dates and occupations not legible for years. They returned on another day to help us plant many hundreds of daffodils and narcissi down the west avenue, which is now much more open, accessible and inviting. We'd planted some daffodils last season also, which brightened up the bank west of the catacombs.

At the request of the Council's Biodiversity Officer, we've planted hundreds of crocuses, as these offer particularly rich pollen to feed queen bees emerging from hibernation. We hope the squirrels leave enough of them for the bees!

As I write (early February 2015), spring bulbs are putting up their shoots. Some snowdrops, in sunnier spots, are in flower already, and soon they'll be joined by bluebells, crocuses, primroses, daffodils, narcissi, grape hyacinths, Star of Bethlehem... Do come for a walk around!



Caroline Gerard
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