



Minutes of the Friends of Cammo Ordinary General Meeting held at Cammo Lodge on the 6th of September 2023 at 7-30 pm

Present: Nick Benge, Chairperson, Simon Gillam, Secretary, Karen Edwards, Membership Secretary, Lynn Whitehead, Treasurer, Michael Roe, Bruce Angus, Carol Smith, Grahame Whitehead, Katherine Thomson, Rachel Stewart, Sheena McRobie, Euan Drysdale, Liz Drysdale, Jayne MacGregor, Rachel Doughty, Judy Arrowsmith, Barbara Braham, Rhona Paterson, Dora Kiss.

Apologies: Gill Harris, Anne Currie, Carol Turnbull, Callum Towns, Joanna Morris, Norma Johnstone, Claire Wallace, Harry Taylor.

Esther Davidson

Before the official meeting started Simon announced the sad news that Esther Davidson, a long-standing member of the Friends of Cammo had sadly passed away. Esther had contributed to Cammo in many ways. As well as coming to these meetings Esther was an active member of the archaeological group EAFS, she stored their finds for a long time and liaised between us and EAFS. Esther was a member of the Forest Church that meets at Cammo, and liaised for us with that group. She was on the rota of volunteers who staff the Lodge as a visitor centre on Sunday afternoons, and just a few months ago Esther led the Forest Kindergarten's activity to add to the planting for bees in the Walled Garden. Esther also participated in other Cammo work parties.

Simon read out tributes from two members who were not able to come to the meeting.

"I no longer have my special friend to walk to Cammo and know like all the other Friends we are in disbelief at the sudden passing of Esther. Since we became friends both through our love of Cammo and working with Esther in our Eco Group at Craigsbank Church we have appreciated her expertise in so many fields and the special way she contributed in every way to see each project through." Anne Currie

"For the (at least 10) years that I've been rota-keeper, Esther has been a faithful Lodge-sitter on Sunday afternoons. I got to know her also through her coming to FoC meetings, where I was impressed by her eloquently expressed views, sometimes going against the grain. When her son died tragically some years ago I admired her remark that living the life of a mountaineer was a risky choice, but he had accepted the possible consequences and that was that. She herself was a hillwalker and nature-lover; when she was waiting for a liver to become available for transplant, and feeling increasingly tired, she stayed as close to nature as possible. One Sunday I found her in the Lodge sorting sloe berries for beverage making. She explained that this was one activity she could enjoy. I will miss our conversations; she was a very special person." Joanna Morris

Rachel Doughty shared a memory of Esther's interest in bees, when she helped relocate a hive which was in Esthers Ikea compost heap beehive. Rachel maintained an interest in this hive and much to Esther's delight she was able to take her some honey from these bees later.

Membership report

Karen Edwards reported that there were 247 members on the books of which 36 still have outstanding subscription payments, this is a reduction on the 70 outstanding in June. Final reminder letters will be sent out shortly. Karen thanked Simon, Lynn and Grahame for taking over her role whilst she was travelling and for leaving the membership looking so healthy.

Treasurer's report

We have £6,235 in the bank made up as follows -

RESTRICTED FUNDS - £215

- £215 specifically for the production of INFORMATION PANELS

GENERAL FUNDS - £6,020

General Funds are down £44 since the 31 December 2022 year end.

This year there have been no unusual items and the main income and expenditure this year has been as follows:-

-annual subscriptions and donations have continued at a satisfactory rate.

- We have spent £1132 on plants and shrubs

- We have spent £125 on bird boxes

- We have spent £667 on our annual insurance premium

Overall, our finances continue to be in a satisfactory condition.

Environmental Update from Nick Bengé

- Birds – Kestrel, Sparrowhawk and Buzzards with chicks have all been seen in the Park this year, and two Barn Owls have raised chicks here.
- Volunteers from the Royal Bank of Scotland have cleared up old woodchip piles. Nick praised them for all their hard work.
- TCV have run a scything workshop in Homefield, they will also remove some of the unwanted rhododendron.
- Nick has been having problems getting water out of the canal. He has done extensive rodding which slightly improved the situation, but it is not resolved. Nick will continue to investigate the problem. Whilst at the canal Nick had spotted an elver and he amazed the audience with the sheer scale of the journey it had been on since it was in the sea. Euan asked if it was going to be reported to the National Rivers Trust.
- The Wetlands have been fabulous, and a moorhen chick had been seen by Bruce Angus.
- Nick reported that a member wanted to buy a duck house as a present for his wife, this will be located in the middle of the wetlands
- Michael Roe introduced Dora Kiss who is producing a Habitat Map of the Cammo estate. She is also reaching out to Napier University to provide the ecology input.
- Michael reported that July had been a poor month for butterflies because of the rain, however, there had been good numbers of Red Admirals and Speckled Wood species. The Holly Blue had also been seen locally in Corstorphine but not in Cammo.

Cammo Bees

Rachel Doughty said that sadly she has had to give up the bees because of a very severe allergic reaction to bee stings. Andrew McAllister has agreed to take them over although she was a little worried that he might be overstretched. This has also been a very poor year for bees because of all the rain, and she does not expect there to be any honey at all this year. Nick asked whether Rachel thought Andrew would be a good custodian of the bees, but she advised that although there had not been contact with Rhona Paterson (who helped Rachel with the bees) he was adamant that he does want to take them

over. Judy thanked Rachel for everything she had done which was a sentiment echoed by the other members. Liz Drysdale also commented that she had had a poor year with her bees too.

Gardening Group

Lynn said that the last Sunday in the month would be the official date for the gardening group to meet although gardeners could come along any Sunday morning if they wanted to. The new flowers in the walled garden have established well but the dryness in June had caused problems and Lynn commented that taking water from the canal presented real difficulties because of the distance. There is the suggestion that the Forest Kindergarten could get a tap installed and this would make things easier. Rachel Doughty thanked all the people who had helped with the planting in the first place.

Simon has cleared vegetation and mulched with woodchips around all the conifers in the pinetum and the Dawn Redwoods by the canal. Sheena mentioned the wire cages around the conifers in the Pinetum short grass and Nick agreed they should be removed.

Archaeology report from the EAFS (Edinburgh Archaeological Field Society)

There was an open day last Monday which Simon believed was quite successful and they sold some of our publications. The next open day is the 22nd of October. Simon read out the following report which had been submitted by the EAFS.

“In the last three months the EAFS team has continued to concentrate efforts on the glasshouse area within the walled garden. We have now revealed the Eastern end of the glasshouse, and we can now confirm the original structure was 100ft in length along the northern wall of the walled garden. An old pathway was discovered, that continues around the glasshouse structure and is about 4ft wide. As the mysteries surrounding how the structure was heated continue, the excavation has revealed more cast-iron pipe work on the western end of the structure, although their relationship with the boiler-house is yet to be revealed. Trimming and cleaning of material on existing structures including the stables and the gardener’s bothy continues. Unfortunately, recent evidence of vandalism at the glasshouse structure and the steading was discovered and reported to Edinburgh council. We hoped this news might expedite possible consolidation work for these structures, although there is no news on that front just yet. All trenching at the end of each day is either recored and backfilled or marked with red safety tape and stakes. Care is taken to never disturb the existing paths within the walled garden.”

Dog Show

Lynn reported that the Lewis Leap had been a great success, especially for her dog Archie who not only won the Golden Oldies section but also the Best in Show Final. Over £4000 was raised by the event and a lot of work had clearly been put in by the family. Two new members had been signed up on the day.

Cammo Management Group

- Although an agreement had been made for the Lodge toilets to be cleaned and re stocked daily this is not happening adequately. The rest of the Lodge still needs to have a cleaning arrangement put in place. Additional cleaning is being done by Lynn and the flood cleaning was done by Simon.
- The pedestrian entry to Cammo from the Cammo Meadows estate and an updated map board are to be funded by Cala, however, the council are awaiting a formal finance agreement. Nick said that we are missing the close working relationship we had with David Kyles, which at present we do not have with Caroline, who has to cover a much wider area of work, and it is difficult to get anything agreed.
- It was suggested that a defibrillator be provided for the Lodge, but the Council have said no unless it is funded from elsewhere. Grant funding might be available to purchase the machine but it would

still need an electricity supply put in by the council to make it operational so as yet there is no progress.

- Draft Management Plan. There has been no progress on this in the last 3 years. We are hopeful that material from the council to allow us to start drafting it may be available in the next couple of months.
- Report into the Environmental Impact of the Forest Kindergarten: funding issues have stalled this report.
- Consolidation of ruins and the potential Lodge extension which was going to be covered by the Cammo Home Farm funds has also ground to a halt. It appears that the new Natural Heritage Officer, Caroline, who has taken over from David Kyles is not able to take this forward at present. It was noted that David's posting has just been extended for three months. Rachel Doughty and Sheena asked whether local Councillors could be involved in moving things along and Nick thought that this might be possible.
- Drainage at the Lodge. The recent improvements did not prevent the Lodge flooding. Nick will have a look to see what the problem is. Sheena said that Roger one of the members cleared the drain at the front door of the Lodge.
- Cammo Gates. Nick said that there is a problem with the gates being left open by some people who use this entrance. It is important that these gates remain closed to prevent unauthorised access to the Park.

New Website

Nick's daughter Josie is working on this and Nick will update the Friends when it has been completed which he thinks will be approximately 5 weeks. Jayne suggested that we could create QR codes using myqrcode.com.

AOB

Volunteers

Barbara Braham asked what formal volunteer groups there were. Simon advised that they are the Lodge Group, the Bee Group, the Gardening Group and the Butterfly Monitoring Group. All other volunteer work tends to be on an as and when required basis.

Apples

Simon reported that most of the apples in the walled garden had now gone, with some apparently picked in bulk. This had not been a problem last year, but it had been in previous years. Sheena mentioned that there was another fully laden tree elsewhere in the park. Nick said that there were other resources to forage, namely sorrel, watercress, blackberries, sloes and tansy.

Visitors to the Lodge

There are visitors to the Lodge, especially now that is open for more hours, however, they are mostly using the toilet rather than engaging with the Friends of Cammo volunteers. It was asked what we could do to make it more attractive, and it was pointed out that it is more difficult as we are not the only users of the building.

Next Meeting

Suggested date for the next meeting Wednesday 6th December. [Later changed to Wednesday 13th December]

Meeting closed