Friends of Cammo
Registered Scottish Charity No. SC033394

NEWSLETTER
AUTUMN 2026
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WELCOME
TO THE AUTUMN NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the Autumn 2026 newsletter. Thanks to editor Lynn and all who have contributed articles and photos. Our thanks also to all the volunteers who help look after Cammo.

Our main article in this issue is on the history of the Walled Garden.

This year we had another good crop of apples. Cammo honey is now available. There was some soft fruit and the areas planted for bees are looking good. The Victorian Garden area has been prepared, but planting will now be postponed until after the winter.

Shortage of rain again affected the stream and wetland.

DATES FOR THE DIARY

GENERAL MEETINGS

Friends of Cammo general meetings will be held on:
Wednesday 2nd December
Wednesday 3rd March
at 7.30 p.m.
in Cammo Lodge

MEADOW MANAGEMENT AT CAMMO

Throughout Scotland there is a consensus around the benefits of Wild Flower Meadows and there are several initiatives to support these and encourage biodiversity.

As a Local Nature Reserve, Cammo plays its part in contributing to this countrywide desire and drive to support nature and biodiversity.

We have 3 large meadows as well as smaller areas of meadow spread around Cammo LNR.

The three largest fields near the main entrances are South, Home and North. Each field has its own distinct nature but they are all managed as wild flower meadows and have had wild flowers planted either in seed form or from community plug planting.

The fields are cut in rotation by the council in a 3 yearly cycle of "Cut and Clear" with the bales of cut grass moved off the main field area to reduce grass dominance and encourage more wild flowers. This, in turn, helps promote biodiversity of plants, insects, birds and mammals.

In addition to this The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) are managing and monitoring several areas at the bottom of South Field. These areas are being cut more frequently to simulate the effect of the more heavy use a field might get if it were grazed by farm animals. It will be interesting to see what difference this additional cutting has on the wild flower dominance of this area.

Above Home Field, on the other side of the path, there are 2 smaller wild flower meadows which are cut and cleared yearly by Cammo Volunteers. You can find these areas near the Wild Flower Interpretation Board, near the wooden resting seats next to the main path.



Wild flower in Cammo Estate

OUT & ABOUT IN CAMMO



The Wildflower Meadow

WILDFLOWER MEADOWS

The annual Autumn/Winter clearing of Cammo's three wildflower meadows has been started. South meadow has been partially cleared. The others will follow during the remainder of Autumn and Winter.

STORM DAMAGE

We were extremely fortunate, that in the recent high winds, our trees coped well and withstood the gusting winds, with no significant loses. However, it is always sad when one comes down, either from a storm or old age.



NEW OWL BOXES IN CAMMO

In order to support the larger birdlife in Cammo, two new Owl and Kestrel nesting boxes have been purchased. They were floored with wood scrapings and installed, high up, on mature trees overlooking a meadow. We will monitor them for activity over the spring.



An owl box located in Cammo Estate

OUT & ABOUT IN CAMMO CONT

CAMMO WETLANDS

Those of you who are regularly in Cammo would have been delighted to see that our wetland is now beginning to fill up again, after what has been an extremely dry summer.



Cammo Wetlands

INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES IN CAMMO



Horsetail

Over summer the volunteers tackled several areas containing invasive snowberries and horsetail. To inhibit the horsetail, some areas were laid with matting and re-covered with soil. Himalayan Balsam was also removed by the North car park.



Himalayan balsalm



snowberries

FIELD CUTTING

North Field received its triennial cut. Bales have been placed around the field trees to slowly decay and provide habitat for a variety of wildlife.



North Field

REPAIRING HOLES IN CAMMO PATH

Grateful thanks to Dougie, Simon and of course, Freddie (the dog), the latter having to do something that is quite alien to a dog – filling in holes. The potholes have appeared in several of our paths in North, Home and South fields. This is an important, ongoing task that our volunteers undertake regularly.



Ongoing repairs to paths

OPEN DAY NATURE WALK

On the 6th September we held an Open Day jointly with the Edinburgh Archaeological Field Society (EAFS).



Excavation work within the Walled Garden

Members of the Committee and volunteers (Michael, Simon, Barbara and Dougie) led groups on a walk around Cammo starting at The Lodge. We then handed over to Lynn and John at the Walled Garden. We led 4 walks each lasting about an hour. We started by talking about the mix of habitats in Cammo: mature woodland, hedgerows, wildflower meadows, canal and wetland. We then set off, following the route shown on the map above.

En route we observed different species of trees, shrubs and wildflowers and talked about the following:

The various mammals that can be seen including Roe Deer, Rabbit, Badger, Stoat, Grey Squirrel, Fox, Mice and Voles.

The different types of birds: Raptors, Owls, woodland and farmland species and those that can be seen at the Canal and the Wetland including Mallard, Moorhen, Heron, occasional sightings of Kingfisher and Reed Bunting.

The wildflower meadows. Most of the fields are cut in the autumn every third year, one field each year (this year North Field is due to be cut), leaving large areas uncut around the field margins. The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) are trialling alternatives in the southeast part of South Field, including more than one intervention in a year.

We talked about the importance of dead and rotting wood for invertebrates, fungi etc.

We covered Butterfly Monitoring. A group of volunteers walk a fixed route (a transect) around Cammo once a week between April and September and submit the results to the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme. A separate group of volunteers record bumblebees.

We discussed Invasive Non-native Species (INNS) like Rhododendron Ponticum, Few-flowered Leak, Snowberry, Mares tail and Himalayan Balsam and the efforts we make to reduce / remove them.

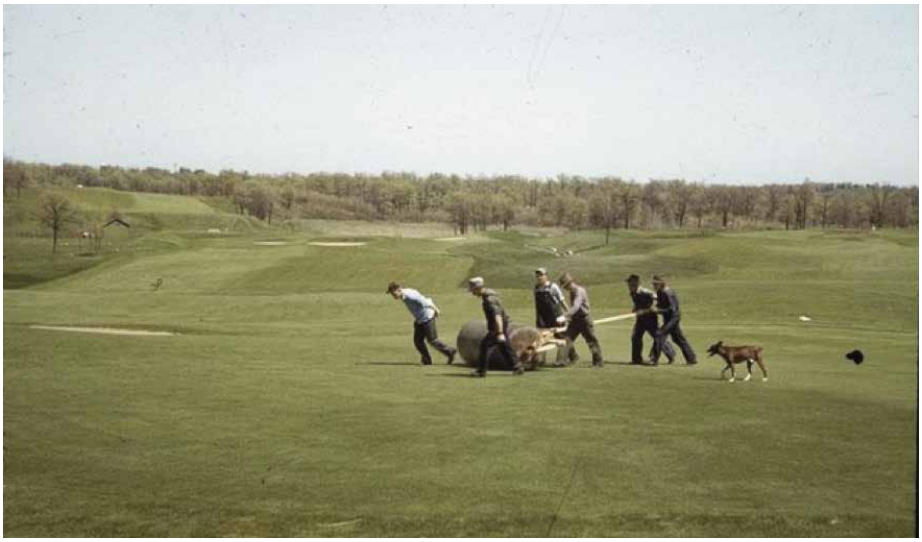

A site along the Open Day Nature Walk

We couldn't really do justice to all the species in the Pinetum but we pointed out the Pinetum Interpretation Board and the availability of our Pinetum Publication.

On reaching the Walled Garden we handed over to Lynn and John who talked about the Honeybees, the planting we have done to help the bees, the soft fruit area and our plans for the Victorian Garden.

FOUR OLD ROLLERS!

(Please note this is not about any of our committee members!!!)



Gamekeepers at work on a golf course similar to Cammo [MSU Libraries]

Our Autumn 2025 Newsletter had extensive coverage of the Cramond Brig Golf Course which was located in Cammo Estate from 1908 to 1931. This 18 hole golf course occupied about three quarters of Cammo Estate.

Almost all signs of the golf course have disappeared, only the mound on the 6th tee can be clearly seen above the western boundary path, at the top of the climb up from the north gate.

However, further signs of the golfing activity can be found in the four old rollers (pictured) which are located in the Estate's undergrowth.

Hand-pulled rollers were an important part of golf-course maintenance around the 1920s, particularly on the closely mown putting greens. Before modern powered machinery became common, greenkeepers used heavy, manually pushed or pulled turf rollers to smooth the grass, firm the surface and help produce a more even ball roll.

The main types of roller were -

Heavy cast-iron roller
A solid metal cylinder with a long handle, pushed by a greenkeeper over the putting surface. Heavy rollers were common in the early 1900s.

Wooden hand roller
Earlier, lighter rollers used wooden cylinders, sometimes weighted with water or ballast. Lightweight manually pushed wooden rollers were being used on putting greens from the mid-1880s.

Horse-drawn rollers and turf equipment
Larger machines were used on wider areas of the course.









Examples of rollers found around Cammo Estate

CAMMO ESTATE APIARY

It's been a really hot summer but thankfully some rain to bring out some fresh blossom. The hot weather does however, increase the tendency for the bees to swarm. And sure enough, even though all three hives had sufficient space, they all swarmed.

I knocked down to one good new queen bee cell in each hive and waited for nature to do her magic. One hive produced an excellent mated queen bee and is doing well, another hive produced a drone laying queen and had to be put down whilst the remaining hive seemed to do nothing. I was therefore forced to purchase a new mated queen bee for £30 from a beekeeper in Livingston and introduce her to her new hive.

Although the introduction seemed to have worked, the hive remains queenless and suffered from wasp attack. I did, however, manage to capture a swarm of bees in Blackhall and they are happy in their new home at Cammo.



Cammo Estate Honey



A thriving beehive

In addition, a small swarm of bees decided to set up home at Cammo as well, so they are now happily settled in a new hive.

So overall, started off with 3 hives at the beginning of Summer and ended up with 3 healthy hives at the start of Autumn!.

The honey has been harvested and in total 42kg of good quality honey has been collected, and jars of honey now for sale at Cloudberry Café in Barnton.

The hives have now been fed syrup, mouse guards have been fitted where necessary, fondant had been added and the next task will be to provide more insulation to the wooden hive and undertake a varroa count to see which hives need treated with oxalic acid in December.

CAMMO WALLED GARDEN

FROM 1780 TO PRESENT DAY

The walled garden in Cammo is often an area that visitors and even regular walkers in Cammo Estate pass by. However, to those of you who find yourself wandering through the walled garden you will find a tranquil and the magical place that it is. Filled from early Spring to late Autumn with birdsong, butterflies and the humming of bees. In the winter months along with our faithful robins and blackbirds, glimpses of finches and other migratory birds, can be seen.

In temperate climates, especially colder areas, such as Scotland, the essential function of the walling of a garden was to shelter the garden from wind and frost. However, in many cases there was also a recreational element included.

What follows is an article written by Harry Taylor, an Honorary Friend of Cammo, as part of 'A Short History of Cammo Estate'. Once you have read it, I am sure your next visit to Cammo walled garden will feel like a totally unique experience. So please let your imagination take you back to 1780 and a time very different to today.

The walled garden was constructed between 1780 and 1782 by Charles Watson, then owner of Cammo Estate. The area of the walled garden amounts to two and half acres, formed by a square with sides 100 metres in length. The perimeter walls are between 4 and 5 metres in height and are constructed of rubble and stone. The east wall was built 1 metre lower than the other three walls for most of its length, presumably to allow early morning sunshine into the garden and it sweeps upward in a curve close to either end to assume the level of the adjoining perimeter walls. This wall also shows, on its external face, a marked distinction in construction, the lower third of its height being built of flat sandstone blocks laid in rough courses, while above this level, the wall consists mainly of field boulders and whin rubble. The inside faces of the north and east wall and the outside faces of the south and west wall, are lined with brick to maximize the retention of solar heat for the benefit of wall grown fruit trees.



Proposed Victorian Flower Garden showing original heated wall

The north wall is a flued wall over most of its middle length, and the remains of two furnace houses are visible against the wall on the outside, as are several flue openings. The inside of this wall has been lime plastered over its middle length and this was the area of hot wall against which one of the large glass house was constructed.

CAMMO WALLED GARDEN CONT

The east end of the south wall contains four bee-boles - square openings with timber lintels set high in the wall - these being a form of bee hive. On the outside, in this location, are the remains of a small lean-to building, probably a gardener's potting shed or bothy, complete with fireplace and its own doorway into the walled garden.



Soft fruit garden with four bee boles showing in the background

The main gateway into the walled garden is located at the south end of the east wall and this is of grand construction having tall dressed-stone pillars either side, on which were hung large wooden doors, the remains of which are still visible. There are five further doorways through the perimeter wall – two in the south wall (one referred to above leading to the gardener's bothy, with another close by); one located in the middle of the west wall; and two in the north wall. Of the north wall doorways, the one towards the west leads directly into and through, one of the furnace houses, while the one to the east bears the initials of Charles Watson and the date 1780, now barely visible due to erosion, cut into its stone lintel.

The original pathway system inside the walled garden formed a square, having plots between each side of the square and the garden walls. A path ran in a north/south direction dividing this square into two equal halves, and these areas were further sub-divided into several plots by small box hedges.

By 1805 an orchard was established outside the south west corner of the walled garden, but this had disappeared by 1853. By 1853 two large glass houses had been constructed within the walled garden, one in the centre of the garden area, and one against the inside of the north wall. All the fruits and vegetables necessary to supply Cammo House throughout the year were grown in the orchard, garden and glass houses, which produced exotic varieties such as peaches, plums, grapes, cherries and apricots.



Wildflower garden

In 1918 the walled garden ceased to function as a working garden, and gradually became overgrown and derelict. Between 1952 and 1956 the garden was used as an enclosure for grazing pigs, but thereafter, again became a wilderness.

CAMMO WALLED GARDEN CONT

This could have been the end story of our much loved Cammo walled garden. The walls by 1975 were beginning to crumble. Where the greenhouses had stood all was left were some brick foundations and broken glass. The garden was also totally overgrown. However, this was not to be the end story but the start of something new.

1975 Cammo was bequeathed to the National Trust for Scotland.

1979 Cammo was Feued to Edinburgh District Council with conservation agreements attached.

2006 A footpath, constructed to wheelchair accessible standards, was routed through the walled garden between the main gate and the gate in the west wall. This path allows access for visitors to view the extensive spread of snowdrops, which can be seen in January and February and have survived over the years. These snowdrops were originally brought from East Lothian by William Hosie, a gardener employed by the Watson family in the late eighteenth century.

2015 The orchard in the walled garden was planted.

2019 The first bee hive in its current enclosure was installed.

2023 The butterfly and bee garden was planted.



reconstructed well



Bee garden

2024 A wall around the well was built.

2025 Major rebuilding of the wall that enclosed the walled garden was completed.

The soft fruit garden was planted up.

Wild flowers were planted around the edge of the wall, in the walled garden.

2027 Next Spring the Victorian Garden will be planted up, where the original glass houses were situated.

So it is a story with a happy ending. We may not have the twenty gardeners that Charles Watson had but we have a group of hard working volunteers, who will continue to tend the walled garden, keeping some areas wild and wonderful for our wildlife but looking after the areas that will keep our bees, butterflies, birds and insects happy.

We look forward to seeing you there!

If you would like to find out more about the history of Cammo Estate, FoC have produced a 21 page booklet 'A Short History of Cammo Estate' (£5). If you would like a copy please contact: lynnwhitehead@mac.com

Grateful thanks to Christine and Maggie from EAFS for their, as always, helpful historical information. The EAFS volunteers continue to work tirelessly in the walled garden and can be found there every Monday, uncovering more of the fascinating history of our walled garden. Their work to date in the walled garden can be found on their website eafs.org.uk

LEWIS LEAP DOG SHOW

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who helped make the fifth Lewis Leap Dog Show such a wonderful community day out for the whole family—and such a success!

Together, we raised an amazing £4,239 for the Lewis Leap Sudden and Traumatic Bereavement Support Service. Every pound will help this vital service support children, young people and adults across Scotland following a sudden and traumatic loss, in partnership with Cruse Scotland.

It was lovely to welcome the team from The National Lottery Community Fund Scotland to help with judging. We are hugely grateful for the funding they recently awarded to Cruse Scotland for the Lewis Leap Sudden and Traumatic Bereavement Support Service.

Congratulations to Bracken the spaniel, our overall winner and very deserving Best in Show, and to Charlie, a wonderful Golden Oldie and our Reserve Champion!

Everyone who joined us will know that the community was the ultimate winner. The smiling faces said it all: families having fun, laughing at Ian's terrible jokes and simply enjoying a brilliant day together.

Save the date: next year's Dog Show is provisionally planned for Sunday 22 August 2027.

If you would still like to support Lewis Leap, you can donate at www.lewisleap.com or buy one of our Christmas wreath-making kits to brighten your doorway for the festive season while supporting those in need.

Orders open on Tuesday 3 November, which would have been Lewis' 21st birthday. The ordering link will also be available on our website at lewisleap.com.

SANTA & ELF DASH

Local business owner, Catriona Bruce of Blast Running Ltd which is based in Cramond, hosts two annual events through Cammo - the Halloween Trail Half Marathon which starts and ends at Longcraigs Scout Hall in South Queensferry and the Santa & Elf Dashes which take place on the Sunday morning before Christmas. Raising awareness and fundraising for the Queensferry RNLI and Young Lives V Cancer charities respectively, these events bring together local runners from the very young elves tackling a 1K route around the North Field to runners in their 40/50/60/70s taking part in longer distances around a challenging route. Catriona says, 'Cammo is such a beautiful park for the runners to enjoy, with shaded wooded paths to climbing the hill behind Cammo Tower, it has something for everyone. We try our best to let the local neighbourhood know about the events and hope that many join in as we are a friendly and welcoming bunch! We're really looking forward to the Santa & Elf Dash again, to be held on the 20th Dec this year.'

THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

Finally our grateful thanks, as always to our hardworking rangers and all our volunteers, who are out there in all weathers, keeping Cammo looking wonderful throughout the changing seasons.

Thank you!

RUS IN URBE
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