



Registered Scottish Charity No. SC033394

# NEWSLETTER

**SPRING 2026**  
**VOLUME 22 ISSUE 1**

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## WELCOME

### TO THE SPRING NEWSLETTER

Welcome to our Spring 2026 newsletter. We extend warm thanks to everyone who has contributed articles and photographs.

In recent months we have welcomed Scouts, Brownies & corporate volunteers to work at Cammo, with more corporate volunteers and ESMS pupils due in early June.

## DATES FOR THE DIARY

### LITTER PICK

Joint litter pick with  
Cramond Association

**Sunday 7th June**

**10.00am - 11.00am**

**meeting at Cammo Lodge**

litter pickers and sacks provided

### GENERAL MEETINGS

Friends of Cammo general meetings will be held on:

**Wednesday 3rd June**

**Wednesday 2nd September**

**Wednesday 2nd December**

**at 7.30 p.m.**

**in Cammo Lodge**

### OPEN DAY with EAFS

An open day is being planned for

**Sunday 6th September**

more details to follow

We were delighted to receive bird boxes from Blackhall and Cammo Brownies and donated saplings from East Craigs Primary PTA.

In the Walled Garden, our volunteers were thankful for the expert assistance and guidance of Jane and Hugh in pruning the apple and pear trees.

Preparation of the Victorian garden continues to progress well.

We are very grateful for this external support and for the dedicated ongoing work of our own volunteers.

Our special feature in this

edition is the archaeological excavation by the Edinburgh Archaeological Field Society (EAFS), which has revealed many unexpected features of the extensive ruins in the centre of the Walled Garden.

Mindful of the increasing numbers of groups and dog walkers visiting Cammo, we have been working hard to protect our rich flora and fauna and to maintain safe areas for ground-nesting birds and mammal habitats. We would ask dog owners to keep their dogs on leads when they see deer, foxes, rabbits or any other wildlife at risk. This protects both our wildlife and the dogs themselves, which can be injured when chasing deer towards roads.



*Flowering fruit trees after pruning*

# AROUND CAMMO ESTATE

## TREE PLANTING

We were delighted when two groups from Cramond scouts came and planted 60 Wych Elm and Ash trees at the bottom of North Field in April and May. They also helped recycle tree guards from the trees that have outgrown them and had fun identifying other trees in Cammo.



*Cramond Scouts newly planted Wych Elm & Ash trees*

## VETERAN TREES IN CAMMO

Many of our veteran trees have developed interesting shapes due to storm damage or competition from neighbouring trees. The following photo was taken in late April with some trees yet to come into leaf.



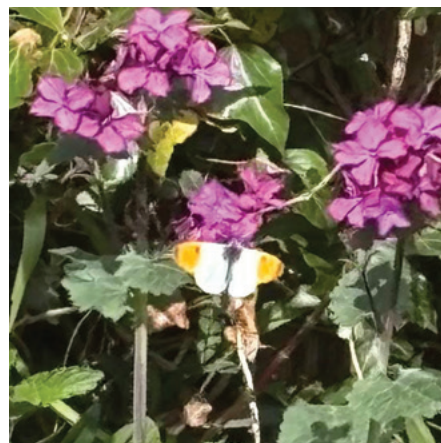
*A storm-damaged Copper Beech near the Pinetum*

# BUTTERFLIES

We have a dedicated group of volunteer butterfly and bee spotters who contribute to citizen science records. This has been a particularly good spring for Peacock butterflies with Orange Tip, Speckled Wood, Green-veined White and Small Tortoiseshell appearing more recently.



*Comma*



*Orange Tip*



*Speckled Wood*



*Small Tortoiseshell*

We are fortunate to have such wonderful wildlife on our doorstep, and it is vital that we all continue to protect it.

*Many thanks to Huw Pennell for the above photograph and our volunteers*

# AROUND CAMMO ESTATE CONT

## CAMMO BIRD WATCH

One of the great joys of Cammo as a local nature reserve is the wide variety of birds and butterflies that thrive in its many habitats. Our conservation work helps to enhance these habitats and encourages even more species to make Cammo and the surrounding countryside their home.



*Garden Warbler*

**A spring visitor, heard recently in Cammo but difficult to spot in the undergrowth.**



*Male Reed Bunting*

**In recent years, the Reed Buntings have been seen in Cammo Estate all-year-round.**

**Two more spring migrants that are difficult to tell apart visually but have very different songs:**



*Chiffchaff*



*Willow Warbler*

**The warblers are spring migrants returning from Africa, while many other species remain here year-round. Other recent arrivals include Swallows and House Martins. We have installed several more nesting boxes and are investing in owl and kestrel boxes.**

## SMALL BIRD NESTING BOXES

Earlier this year we were delighted to receive bird boxes from two local Brownie groups. The Blackhall troop presented us with beautifully decorated and personalised boxes for tits, sparrows and bats. From Cramond we received lovely boxes for wrens and robins – a great mix.

We took the Brownies into the estate to choose suitable trees, and the boxes have now been installed throughout Cammo to ensure good coverage.

Occupancy rates for our existing small bird boxes have been over 90% in recent years, so these new additions are very welcome. They will undoubtedly be put to good use.

Many thanks to the Brownies of Blackhall and Cramond for their lovely contributions to the Cammo estate.



*The wonderful inscription on this particular bird box reads 'Welcome People of the sky'*

Identifying birds can be challenging, but with the help of the Merlin app and the sharp eyes of our volunteers we have so far recorded more than 30 species. These include:

Blue Tit	Greenfinch	Jackdaw
Great Tit	Bullfinch	Carrion Crow
Coal Tit	Blackcap	Maggie
Long-tailed Tit	Nuthatch	Wood Pigeon
Chiffchaff	Treecreeper	Collared Dove
Dunnock	Meadow Pipit	Stock Dove
Robin	Great Spotted Woodpecker	Starling
Wren	Willow Warbler	Kestrel
Blackbird	Garden Warbler	Moorhen
Song Thrush	Reed Bunting	Mallard
Mistle Thrush	Redpoll	Heron
Goldfinch	Yellowhammer	Kingfisher
Chaffinch	Jay	

# INSIDE THE WALLED GARDEN

Following the renovations made to the wall, we are continuing to clear bricks, stones and debris from this area. The wildflowers planted last year at the base of the walls are looking great and have come back strongly this spring. The hedging plants surrounding the bee enclosure have been weeded to encourage growth and better protection of the hives. We have also planted additional saplings and willow cuttings and put tubes around some planted earlier. Over the coming summer the walled garden will return to the tranquil, beautiful space it was before the wall renovation.

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## BEE & BUTTERFLY GARDEN AND SOFT FRUIT GARDEN

These areas are doing well, and we hope the soft fruit garden will produce a good crop this year. It will be important to keep the Bee & Butterfly Garden and Soft Fruit Garden watered and weeded over the summer.

## THE PROPOSED VICTORIAN GARDEN

Progress on this area has been slower than planned because of the large quantities of broken glass from the Victorian glasshouse that once stood here. Because of the glass, we were unable to use volunteer groups for this task. Just beneath the surface we also encountered cemented bricks that had supported, this once, magnificent glasshouse which had been heated by a charcoal furnace situated behind the wall. This system enabled the Victorian gardeners to grow exotic fruits throughout the winter months.

Whilst digging in this area we also had to contend with

heavy rain followed by freezing conditions. However, with the help of excellent chocolate and lively conversation I am delighted to report that we are now back on schedule. By the first week of June this area will be fully dug over, with a layer of cardboard laid as a weed suppressant and a thin covering of soil on top to hold it in place and improve the appearance. We will not plant up this area until September, as sadly the well in the Walled Garden appears to have dried up and is only holding rain water. Our nearest reliable water source is the canal so we will focus then on planting up the Victorian Garden in the autumn.

## BEE UPDATE Cammo Apiary Update 24 May 2026

All three hives survived the winter well. The numerous snowdrops in the Walled Garden provided an excellent early forage source, helping the colonies build up from late winter into early spring.



*Snowdrops in the Walled Garden*

Although the early spring weather has not been ideal, the hives have continued to grow. Two of the three hives showed signs of swarming; despite my best efforts with hive manipulations, both swarmed. We are now waiting for the new virgin queens to emerge, mate and begin laying so that we have queen-right colonies once again. The supers are filling nicely, so we should have honey available for sale later in the summer.

*Many thanks to John, our apiarist, for this report and for the many hours he devotes to caring for our bees.*

# EDINBURGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SOCIETY

## **Excavation in the Cammo Walled Garden by the Edinburgh Archaeological Field Society**

Since November 2024, the EAFS has been working in the centre of the Walled Garden. When the excavation was started, the whole area was covered in ivy and brambles, with only a dressed stone and a few bricks poking through the undergrowth.

Estate plans from the end of the 19th century and early 20th century show a substantial structure there, almost all of which had a glass roof, indicated by the cross-hatching on the drawing. We believe this to have been the Conservatory mentioned in the inventory drawn up when the estate was sold in 1896.



*Excavation work within the Walled Garden*

The aim of the excavation is to confirm that the feature is indeed the Conservatory and to reveal its extent, with, hopefully, some hints as to how it was used. In the 1980s, when Edinburgh District Council acquired the estate, the site had to be made safe. Broken walls had to be flattened and pieces of rusty metal were removed; deep holes were filled. This means we are looking for the remnants of walls and their foundations, and any other evidence of the building that remains at ground level or below.

While the digging continues, our research team, led by Ann Kerrigan, delve into the archives to help our understanding of the story of the Estate. Alexander Campbell, a wealthy brewer, owned Cammo from 1873 - 1887. Plans of the garden pre-dating 1873 do not include any buildings, so it seems most probable that the previously excavated glasshouse along the north, heated, wall and the conservatory date to his period of ownership, but, unfortunately, this has proved impossible to verify, as there appear to be no written records available from this time. Finding invoices from suppliers or builders would be very helpful!

# EDINBURGH ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD SOCIETY

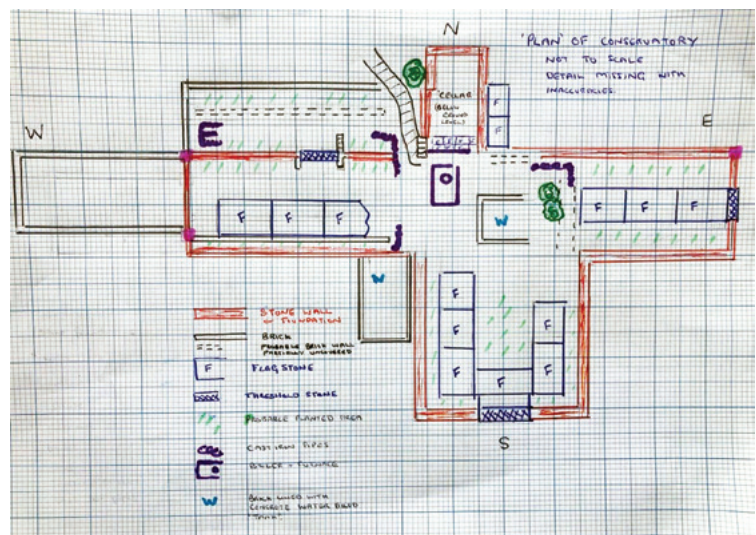


Members of our team at work in Cammo Estate

By August 2025, we had uncovered surfaces of walls to the west and south. These had quite deep, stone foundations with at least one course of bricks mortared to the top, which could have provided a substantial base for the heavy, cast-iron frame needed to hold the glass sides and roof. Several quite large pieces of rusted cast-iron, probably part of the frame, and several bits of guttering have been found to support this interpretation. It is a little strange, however, that the stonework, the flagstones uncovered within the structure, and the few large, dressed stones seem to be of considerably better quality than the bricks.

This has led to speculation that there were two phases of construction - the original conservatory being altered to become more utilitarian at some stage. From research it is difficult to see when this might have happened. If the estate plans are accurate (they may not be) there was no building at all in the first half of the 19th century, but the owners after 1896 do not appear to have shown interest in, or spent money on, alterations to the garden.

Comparison of the area of foundations uncovered with the plan from 1893 suggests we have now revealed the full extent of the building. The fat t-shaped part is an impressive size, with at least two entrances, one to the west and the main one to the south. Both have flagged pathways leading to the centre with probable planted areas to each side.



The sketch included here shows the extent of excavation to date (April 2026)

At the back, north, edge is a brick building, possibly a potting shed. The conservatory was clearly well heated and tracking the remains of cast-iron pipes, carrying water or steam, has been a major target.

Several members of EAFS have been doing research into how a 19th century heating system like this one might have worked, but, despite several theories, we have no firm conclusions.

At the bottom of the planting beds at the edge of the flagstones to the south, Jim has been following a line of terracotta pipes, presumably used to aid drainage.



We are still debating the purpose of the cement-lined brick 'tanks'. Over the winter these filled with water, making it impossible to remove any more of the hardcore inside them. It would help our understanding if we could reach the base and find any drains or inlet pipes.

An interesting excavation from the last six months has been the clearing of the saddle boiler and the cellar that gave access to it. Clearing the cellar itself has been challenging as it was used as a rubbish dump - filled with demolition rubble mixed in with a rotten 1970s carpet and various plastic bags. At some time since the 1980s a makeshift floor about half way down was created from random bricks and slabs (making a den or a shelter for someone?) and this provided a handy ledge for our volunteers to get in and out. Very recently, we finally reached the floor surface at the boiler end, comprising small, black-stained flag stones. This enabled Michael to clear the whole of the front of the boiler and furnace. Sadly, we have not found a date or manufacturer's name on it.

At the north end of the cellar, two large dressed stones at right-angles to each other form the top edge, each with a ridge that could have held a trap door. It seems likely that this was the way in, descending using a ladder or wooden steps.

As previously, we do not have many small finds other than quantities of broken plant pots, a few with decorative elements; plus some shards of pottery, a couple of bottles, a button, some small animal bones, one part of a clay pipe stem, a grape label and some nails. Among the corroded and rusty cast-iron pieces uncovered, we have two quite large partial grids with decorated edges that must have been part of a walkway allowing heat to rise from pipes below.

**We have a good number of consistently enthusiastic volunteers and many others who take part on a one-off basis. We are grateful for all their hard work. We welcome all who would like to have a go at any aspect of archaeology, with or without previous experience. To ensure we will be on site, check the website and/or email [volunteer@eafs.org](mailto:volunteer@eafs.org)**

*Many thanks to Maggie for this report and Christine and the EAFS team for all their amazing work*

# FRIENDS OF CAMMO ARE LOOKING FOR A NEW TREASURER

Having been our Treasurer for many years, Lynn has notified the Committee of her intention to step down in March next year. She will, of course, continue to do great volunteering work in Cammo.

We are keen to hear from any members who may be interested in taking on the Treasurer role. We are looking for someone, ideally with a finance / accounting background who is fairly local and has an interest in nature. If you are of working age, being a volunteer Treasurer for a nature charity would be good for the CV and is very compatible with corporate ESG principles. If you are retired, it is a very worthwhile way of making an active contribution to nature and your community. The duties are not too onerous and as a committee and a group of volunteers, it is rewarding, worthwhile and fun.

The Treasurer's responsibilities include:

- Book keeping: managing the bank account, income (membership subscriptions and donations) and expenditure
- Managing the annual Gift Aid process
- Managing the annual charity insurance renewal
- Data Protection compliance
- Completing the annual return to the charity regulator OSCR and lodging the annual accounts with them.

Our finances are in a healthy state and we have well-established prices and procedures. Lynn will be helping her successor by offering handover support and a period of 'parallel running'. If interested please email:  
[friendsofcammo@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:friendsofcammo@yahoo.co.uk)

## THANKS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

As always our grateful thanks to our hard working ranger Jen and all our wonderful volunteers, who keep Cammo looking amazing throughout the year.

Thank you!



Email: [friendsofcammo@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:friendsofcammo@yahoo.co.uk)

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