



Welcome to the Autumn 2023 edition of the volunteer newsletter

As the days grow shorter and some of our sites have begun their winter closures, I want to thank our volunteers for another fantastic season as part of team HES.

We are successfully working through the third stage of our [Investing in Volunteers](#) re-accreditation journey and we will be in touch soon with our volunteers to invite you to take part in the fourth stage assessment.

Following on from my previous update, HES colleagues continue to work behind the scenes getting the TeamKinetic volunteer management system ready to roll out. This will be a one stop shop for

finding out about volunteering opportunities, logging your volunteer hours, accessing and updating your details at any time, communicating with your volunteer coordinator and other volunteers at your location, and much more! Look out for a special communication from Volunteer Development Officer Joanna Todd in the new year to tell you more.

We'd like your feedback on HES's Outline Strategic Plan showcasing detailed principles, vision, and objectives to deliver a new future for Holyrood Park that could transform the Park into a climate positive asset for Scotland, strengthen its iconic status and provide fur

ther wellbeing benefits. To find out more and take part in the survey, visit our website: www.historicenvironment.scot/about-us/news/a-new-future-for-edinburgh-s-holyrood-park

Thank you again for supporting HES as a volunteer.



Alex Paterson
Chief Executive
Historic Environment Scotland



Join us for a volunteer-exclusive Archives visit

Did you know that the HES Archives and Library hold over five million historic photographs, drawings and more? We invite you to a volunteer-exclusive visit to view material in our search room with our Archives team at John Sinclair House in Edinburgh on 29 January 2024.

Spaces are limited, so please contact Volunteer Development Officer Joanna Todd via volunteering@hes.scot to book a spot.

Taking Action for Nature Together

The Bathgate Hills Venture shares their experience of invasive species removal at Cairnpapple Hill



Volunteers at Cairnpapple Hill

HES and Bathgate Hills Venture's relationship was formed through our [Community Connections Programme](#).

Fireweed, St Anthony's Laurel, Chamerion angustifolium...Rosebay Willowherb has a multitude of names and uses. Fermented into black tea, it was popularly called Ivan Chai, exported from Russia out into Europe up to the 18th century, when many considered it to have invigorating powers. Elephant Hawk Moth caterpillars devour this plant, bees and other pollinators love it, and its bright pink spikes liven up a grey day wherever they're seen. It's a very

effective coloniser of traumatised soil, giving rise to one of its most popular names: Bombweed.

But even with such a beautiful pioneer plant, there can be too much of a good thing. While Rosebay Willowherb has a part to play in the reclamation of wasteland, it is often labelled invasive because those swards of rich magenta can take over a landscape entirely, leaving other vegetation to struggle for space and soil.

Up around the Historic Environment Scotland site of Cairnpapple Hill the Bathgate Hills Venture had already worked on Rosebay Willowherb clearance in 2022, with some success in thinning out, though more needed to be done. This year we were back, judiciously weeding the Rosebay Willowherb to a tideline below which it could thrive as it liked. Our goal was to make room for other species and keep the main site distinct, so that visitors can clearly see the post holes, pits, and other features of the cairn and its surrounds.

It was the perfect day for a little exercise, nothing too strenuous, the weather warm and breezy. Everyone set to work building piles of willowherb, only to discover various heathers and astonishing crops of ripe blaeberreries hiding beneath. People talk about how rewarding it is

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Images left to right: The vivid flowers of Rosebay Willowherb; an Elephant Hawk Moth; Cairnpapple Hill from above



The volunteers getting stuck in

to volunteer and this was a day to prove it, friends and families working together in this extraordinary place where an ancient tomb lies peaceful amid all the fresh life of the hills. There is a satisfaction in seeing a site made neat, but not too neat, where history and nature enhance each other for the benefit of the community. And those blaeberreries were delicious!

Interested in taking action for nature?

The Bathgate Hills Venture charity was created in lockdown, when

the positive effects of the environment on people's mental and physical health became evident. The easy accessibility of the Bathgate Hills meant that the local history, geology, flora, and fauna could nourish people at a time when the world seemed restricted to gloom on screens.



Cairnpapple peeking from behind a mound of removed Rosebay Willowherb

Now the charity exists to continue helping people engage with the Bathgate Hills. Bathgate Hills Venture volunteers can be of all ages and anyone is welcome! To find out more visit:

<https://bathgatehills.co.uk/about-bathgate-hills-venture/>

Heritage Directorate shares how they are *Pointing the Way to the Future*



Walking to St Blane's Church on Bute

At HES, our work relates to supporting our communities, our places, and our environment to thrive. Ensuring our decisions maximise the historic environment's role Scotland's sustainable development is part of this. We have a responsibility within our [regulatory and advisory services](#) to enable good decision-making about changes to our historic environment. This work is underpinned by our [Historic Environment Policy for Scotland](#).

The global climate and nature crises have introduced new challenges, with Scotland's heritage on the front line. Our new statement, [Pointing the Way to the Future](#), outlines our duty to ensure the historic environment plays a positive part in Scotland's response to these emergencies. This is the start of a process of engagement and consultation to inform our approach about our decisions, advice, and guidance. We need to work collaboratively to get this right.

We are already working to respond to the climate and nature crises in many ways. This includes supporting the Scottish Government's [net zero targets](#) by being a key consultee on proposed major energy infrastructure developments to ensure impacts to the historic environment are minimised. You can read more about this in our blog: <https://blog.historicenvironment.scot/2023/09/protecting-the-past-and-pointing-the-way-to-the-future/>

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

What's your name? Joyce Leong

How long have you been volunteering and how did you start?

Having recently retired and settled in Edinburgh as my new home, I received an email from HES early this summer about the opportunity to volunteer at Craigmillar Castle. A few simple emails led me to the castle. I was immediately impressed, by both the place and the people.



Image: Visitor Connector Joyce Leong

What's your role? Visitor Connector at Craigmillar Castle

What does that involve?

I engage with visitors to Craigmillar Castle and one of my favourite ways is my "Secret Garden Tour". Three Sundays each month, I take visitors to places that are typically off the visitor route, such as two former entrances to the castle and an ornamental P-shape fishpond. These are short tours lasting around fifteen minutes, during which we talk a little about the history and the stories about the location. Tradition, power struggles, betrayal, and even murder! Craigmillar Castle is rich in events; there's much more to it than meets the eye. My volunteer coordinator Anna provided me with valuable reference materials. After reading them, I came to appreciate the castle a lot more and am glad to share this knowledge with the visitors. Often, I can see their faces light up or sense their intrigue. I know then, an impact is made. It feels satisfying.

Has volunteering helped you with any skills?

My volunteering has helped me to be adaptable. Anna emphasizes the diverse needs of our visitors and encourages me to adapt the tours accordingly. One of my favorite variations is for families with children. We skip the history and chatter, instead heading straight for the fishpond, where the little ones can run wild or roll down grassy slopes. Their laughter is music to my ears, and their happiness is contagious. I'm grateful to be part of a highly knowledgeable team at Craigmillar Castle. When visitors pose tricky questions, the stewards always come to the rescue. The depth of their knowledge about the castle and its history never ceases to amaze me, and I've learned so much from them.

What do you enjoy most about volunteering?

Volunteering has been an incredibly rewarding experience. It opens a window for me, a retiree and newcomer to Edinburgh, to better know the city, meet people, and do things I enjoy doing. Do something meaningful with my spare time? Check. Learn something new in the process? Check. Meanwhile, have fun and enjoy? Check. The experiences of the past 4 months volunteering with HES have given me everything I had hoped for and so much more.

Virtual Roman Frontiers

The Digital Documentation Team on our free *Antonine Wall* and *Go Roman* apps

Did you know that HES has released two apps about the Antonine Wall, both of which are free to download? [Antonine Wall](#), developed with partners in Austria and Germany through Creative Europe funding, lets you virtually explore the Wall and use GPS navigation to find points of interest. You can discover 3D models of excavated Roman artefacts, plus view 360° virtual reconstructions of forts along the Wall. There's even an augmented reality feature, which lets you view these virtual reconstructions while you're physically at Bar Hill fort! Maps and content can also be downloaded for offline use.



Image: A view of the Bar Hill Fort screen on The Go Roman app

[Go Roman](#) app is an educational game where you can learn what life was like 2,000 years ago at Bar Hill fort. You can play the game as either Julius, an elite archer, or Verecunda, an enslaved girl, completing tasks and collecting hidden Roman coins to discover stories of those who lived in or near the fort. The game is based on an accurate 3D reconstruction of Bar Hill, made using laser scan data and archaeological evidence, and you can explore 3D models of archaeological artefacts excavated from the site.

Find out more about our Heritage Directorate

Sign up to *The Lintel* newsletter

Want to learn more about the work of our HES Heritage Directorate? The Heritage Directorate has a newsletter, *The Lintel*, where we share the work they do in our regulatory and advisory services, including opportunities to learn about work on the climate and nature crises and opportunities to get involved in consultations. Contributors include art and architectural historians, archaeologists, and planners, as well as specialist technical and support staff. If you would like to learn more, please sign up to Lintel:



www.historicenvironment.scot/about-us/the-lintel



Want to feature in the next issue?

We'd love to hear from you! To share your volunteering story either have a chat with your volunteer coordinator or get in touch via:

volunteering@hes.scot

Do you follow us on social media? Here's where to find us:



Facebook: [@HistoricEnvScotland](https://www.facebook.com/HistoricEnvScotland)



X (formerly Twitter): [@HistEnvScot](https://twitter.com/HistEnvScot)



Instagram: [@HistEnvScot](https://www.instagram.com/HistEnvScot)

Blog: <https://blog.historicenvironment.scot>

Image: a volunteer in a purple event volunteer tabard using a mobile phone



Images: round icons visually representing volunteer roles, including visitor experience, musician, gardener, forums & groups, events, conservation, archives, digital, and community archaeology.



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Image: icon of individuals in purple silhouette holding the letters spelling HES volunteering, in front of gold silhouette of Scottish natural and built heritage landmarks