

Walking Group



January - February 2012

Winter Heavens

Sharp is the night, but stars with frost alive
Leap off the rim of earth across the dome.
It is a night to make the heavens our home
More than the nest whereto apace we strive.
Lengths down our road each fir-tree seems a hive,
In swarms outrushing from the golden comb.
They waken waves of thoughts that burst to foam:
The living throb in me, the dead revive.
Yon mantle clothes us: there, past mortal breath,
Life glistens on the river of the death.
It folds us, flesh and dust; and have we knelt,
Or never knelt, or eyed as kine the springs
Of radiance, the radiance enrings:
And this is the soul's haven to have felt.

George Meredith (1888)



JANUARY - FEBRUARY WALKS

If you want to join the walking group, contact Gabrielle (0131 558 1425) beforehand.

Be aware that all walks are subject to change, in case of any doubt, contact me.

THURSDAY 12TH JANUARY – CRAMOND (WE WILL TRY CRAMOND ISLAND DEPENDING ON THE TIDE)

MEETING POINT: 1 PM / BUS STATION ENTRANCE/ST ANDREWS SQUARE/IN FRONT OF LOUIS VUITTON

Going by: Lothian Bus 41

There is evidence to suggest that the island may have had special significance to the prehistoric peoples who lived along the coast of the Firth of Forth, as at least one stone burial cist was found.

As nearby Cramond was a Roman outpost, it is likely that it may have been used by them. The Roman presence in Scotland was not particularly strong, but Cramond is one of the most archaeologically rich sites, along with Trimontium near Melrose.

Throughout most of its history, Cramond Island was used for farming, especially sheep-farming, and perhaps served as a fishing outpost as well. The island was once famous for its oyster beds, but these were destroyed due to overfishing. In the north west corner of the island there are remains of a jetty built with local stone which could be medieval in origin, while towards the centre of the island, half-hidden by a small wood there is the ruin of a stone-built farmstead. It appears on an Ordnance Survey map of 1853, but may be considerably older. It was occupied until the 1930s and sheep were still kept on the island as late as the 1960s.

World War II

At the outbreak of World War II, Cramond Island, along with other islands in the Forth, was fortified to protect the coasts in the event of enemy warships entering the channel. A number of these buildings remain and can be explored. After crossing the causeway, the first structures are the emplacements for a 75 mm gun and its associated searchlight. More buildings are in the north east corner of the island, which include a variety of stores, shelters and gun emplacements, as well as two engine rooms that once contained all the equipment necessary to supply power to the military installations on the island.

Further along the northern coast, low concrete stumps protrude from the undergrowth, all that remain of the barracks that housed the garrison on the island.

On the western side is small brick building of unknown purpose. Nearby, perched precariously on the rocky shore is the ruin of a small square building which was used as an ammunition store during the war, though its stone construction suggests it is much older than either World War, possibly contemporary with the farmstead in the middle of the island.

THURSDAY 26TH JANUARY – PICNIC IN ABERDOUR (Long walk)

MEETING POINT: TIME TBC / WAVERLEY TRAIN STATION / IN FRONT OF WSMITH SHOP

Going by: By train

Aberdour is a scenic and historic village on the south coast of Fife, Scotland. It is on the north shore of the Firth of Forth.

The origins of the village lie with its harbour, where the Dour Burn enters the River Forth.

In the 18th century Aberdour's harbour was improved by the addition of a stone pier to help handle the coal traffic from nearby collieries. However, in the 1850s the traffic changed dramatically, and Aberdour Harbour became a popular destination for pleasure steamers from Leith. This in turn led to the building of a deeper water pier a little around the bay at Hawkcraig, and to the development of hotels and many of the other services still on view today in the village.

The railway came to Aberdour in 1890, with the building of the line east from the newly opened Forth Railway Bridge. The station has won many "best kept station" awards. The half an hour journey to the centre of Edinburgh helped build on the existing popularity of the village, though it put the steamers out of business. The main result was a growth in the building of large and attractive houses, especially down the hill from Wester Aberdour to the West Sands.

Aberdour is home to two beaches - The Silver Sands, and The Black Sands.

The Silver Sands is located on the East side of the village, and is one of Scotland's seven "Blue flag" awarded beaches, which denotes an exemplary standard of cleanliness, facilities, safety, environmental education and management.

The Black Sands, as the contrasting name would suggest, has a rockier and darker sand, and is also popular with visitors exploring the rock caves and fascinating sea life. During the summer months (April–September), dogs are unfortunately banned from the Silver Sands but are allowed all year round at the Black Sands. The two beaches are linked by part of the Fife Coastal Path which also takes you past the harbour and the Hawkcraig - a popular rock climbing location.

Silver Sands is becoming more popular with open water swimmers, who swim daily in the sea, both as a leisure pursuit, and as training for open water competition.

**THURSDAY 9TH FEBRUARY – SOUTH QUEENSFERRY (THE COAST SIDE)
(Long walk)**

MEETING POINT: 1PM / WAVERLEY TRAIN STATION / IN FRONT OF WSMITH SHOP

Going by: By train

THURSDAY 23RD FEBRUARY – MUSSELBURGH (RIVER ESK) (Easy but long walk)

MEETING POINT: 1 PM / BUS STATION ENTRANCE/ST ANDREWS SQUARE/IN FRONT OF LOUIS VUITTON

Going by: Lothian Bus 26



😊 WINTER RECIPES 😊

😊 Sweet and sour cabbage broth

Why: Cabbage is an excellent source of vitamin C. It also contains significant amounts of glutamine, an amino acid that has anti-inflammatory properties. Cabbage can also be included in dieting programs, as it is a low calorie food.

In European folk medicine, cabbage leaves are used to treat acute inflammation. A paste of raw cabbage may be placed in a cabbage leaf and wrapped around the affected area to reduce discomfort. Some claim it is effective in relieving painfully engorged breasts in breastfeeding women.

Fresh cabbage juice has been shown to promote rapid healing of peptic ulcers.

Recipe:

Prep time: Less than 30 min

Cook time: 10 to 30 min

Serves: 1

Ingredients:

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- ½ onion, chopped
- 1 garlic clove, chopped
- 1 leek, chopped
- 1 tbsp white wine vinegar
- 1 tbsp honey
- 100g/3½oz cabbage, shredded
- 50g/2oz potato, peeled and cut into cubes
- 150ml/5fl oz hot vegetable stock

1. Heat the oil in a frying pan and fry the onion and garlic until softened.
2. Add the leek and fry until softened, then add the vinegar and the honey and simmer for one minute.
3. Add the cabbage and the potato and fry for 2-3 minutes.
4. Add the stock, bring to the boil, then reduce the heat to and simmer for 5-6 minutes, or until the potato is cooked through.
5. To serve, pour the broth into a warm bowl.

😊 Spinach baked eggs with parmesan & tomato toasts

Why: Recent research has shown that spinach leaves that look fully alive and vital have greater concentrations of vitamin C than spinach leaves that are pale in color. The study authors suggest that the greater supply of vitamin C.

In a recent study on the relationship between risk of prostate cancer and vegetable intake "including the vegetables spinach, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, mustard greens, turnip greens and collards", only spinach showed evidence of significant protection against the occurrence of aggressive prostate cancer.

Given the fact that spinach is an excellent source of other antioxidant nutrients—including vitamin C, vitamin E, beta-carotene, and manganese—as well as a very good source of the antioxidant zinc and a good source of the antioxidant selenium—it's no wonder that spinach helps lower risk of numerous health problems related to oxidative stress.

Recipe:

Prep time: 15 min

Cook time: 20 mins

Serves: 4

Ingredients:

- 400.0g fresh spinach
- 100.0g Basil, parmesan & tomato butter
- 4 eggs
- 8-12 slices French stick

1. Heat oven to 190C/fan 170C/gas 5. Wash the spinach and trim off any thick stalks. Put into a large pan, then cook, covered, until the spinach is wilted, about 2-3 mins. Drain well, pressing out all excess water, then return to the pan with about a quarter of the butter, stirring until the spinach is glistening.
2. Heat grill to high. Divide the spinach between 4 buttered ramekins, then break an egg into each. Season with salt and pepper, then top with a slice of butter. Bake for 10-12 mins, until the eggs are just set. Meanwhile, grill the bread on one side until crisp, then spread the untoasted side with the remaining butter and grill again until crisp. Serve the eggs with the toast on the side.

😊 French onion soup

Why: Wide-ranging claims have been made for the effectiveness of onions against conditions ranging from the common cold to heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, and other diseases. They contain chemical compounds believed to have anti-inflammatory, anti-cholesterol, anticancer, and antioxidant properties. Preliminary studies have shown increased consumption of onions reduces the risk of head and neck cancers.

Among all varieties, Asian white onions have the most eye irritating chemical reaction. Regular use of white onion, if eaten raw, is claimed to be good due to its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.

In India some sects do not eat onions as they believe them to be an aphrodisiac.

In few part of the world, onions are used to heal blisters and boils. Half-baked onion with sugar is placed over the finger and fingernail in case of inflammation.

Onions may be beneficial for women, who are at increased risk for osteoporosis as they go through menopause, by destroying osteoclasts so they do not break down bone.

An American chemist has stated the pleiomic chemicals in onions have the potential to alleviate or prevent sore throat. Onion in combination with jaggery has been widely used as a traditional household remedy for sore throat in India.

Recipe:

Prep time: 1 hour

Serves: 4

Ingredients:

- 50g butter
- 1kg brown onions , thinly sliced
- 2 tbsp thyme , picked leaves
- 3 tbsp dry sherry
- beef stock fresh, cube or concentrate made up to 1.2 litres

Crouton

- 1 baguette , sliced
 - 1 garlic clove , halved
 - extra-virgin olive oil
 - 100g Gruyère , grated
1. Heat the butter in a large pan and gently cook the onion and thyme until the onion is softened but not browned - about 20 minutes. Increase the heat slightly and cook for 15 minutes, until the onion becomes dark golden, sticky and caramelised, stirring now and again to stop it catching. Add the sherry and simmer for 2-3 minutes, then add the stock and bring to the boil. Season. Simmer for 10 minutes.
 2. Meanwhile, toast the bread, rub each slice with garlic, then drizzle with a little oil. Sprinkle with the cheese and grill until golden and bubbling. Serve the soup with the cheese croutons on top.

CALL FOR NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS

If you would like to make a contribution to the next newsletter it would be gratefully received. Ideas include recipes, short articles on walks you have been on – either with the group or independently, information on nature and the environment, or anything else you think the group might be interested in hearing about. Contact Gabrielle (0131 558 1425) or Julia (0131 478 7929).