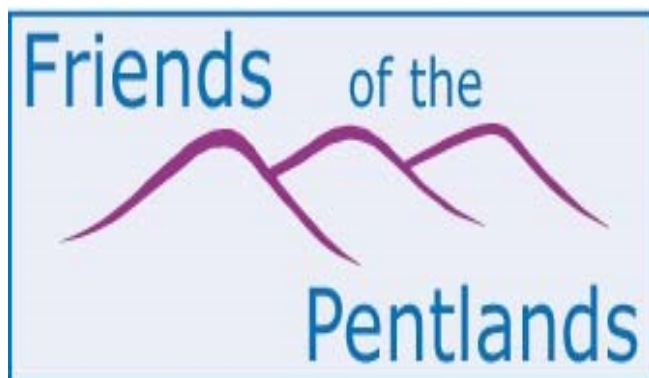




Pentland Post

October 2015

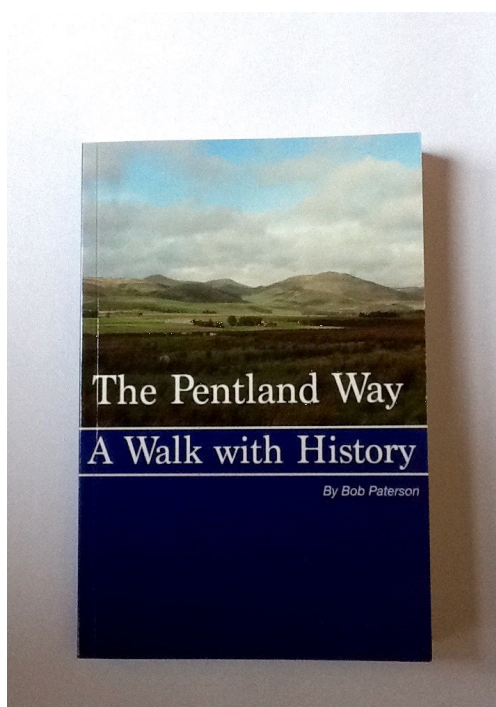


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Charity Number
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Picture above: Dr Roger Sidaway took this from his window in Morningside. It reminds us how close the Pentlands are to our capital city, and how beautiful they can be in winter.

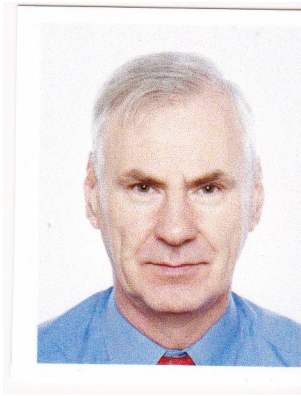
Review of “The Pentland Way: A Walk Through History”

The Pentland Way is a 20 mile walk from Dunsyre to Swanston devised and waymarked by Friends of the Pentlands in 2014. Founding member of Friends Bob Paterson knows the hills well and is also a keen historian. His guide to the walk is much more than a navigation aid; it tells the walker (or armchair walker) stories from the past which add a fascinating dimension to the Way. Andrew Thin of Scottish Natural Heritage sums up the book in his Foreword: *“There are nuggets to inspire the imagination on almost every page.”*



I used it on the Pentland Way this autumn and found it informative and practical from start to finish. It is pocket size with excellent photographs, and has a removable, waterproof 3-part map. I recommend it to Pentland walkers who take an interest in the passing landscape and its history. It can be bought at Craigdon Mountain Sports, Water of Leith Trust, Currie Post Office, Colinton Post Office or through Friends of the Pentlands Secretary John Stirling (01314493456). All proceeds go to support the work of Friends of the Pentlands. Further information can be found at www.pentlandfriends.org.uk

David Syme



The View From Scald Law

By Allan Ainslie

Before joining Friends of the Pentlands my only experience of the Pentland Hills was as a Boy Scout. I lived in West Lothian at that time and accompanied a fellow Scout on a 10 mile walk around the Pentlands close to Harperrig. I remember it well; it was a very cold February day and equipment then was poor compared with now. I froze, which probably explains why I still carry extra gear on my outings.

Four years ago I offered to help Bob Patterson, then our secretary, who was having to deal with many issues, including an increasing number of planning applications. Subsequently I joined the Board as the person responsible for planning matters.

The FoP definition of the Pentland Hills is not restricted to the regional park but includes most of the land bordered by the A702 to the south, the A70 in the north, the A721 in the south west and covers five Local Authorities. My remit is to consider any planning applications in and around the Pentlands, assess their effect on the enjoyment of the hills by our members and the public and, if necessary, raise an objection. I also respond to new draft planning documents such as Local Plans sent to me for comment by Local Authorities and other Government bodies.

Local Authorities all have Planning Portals where any member of the public can go on-line to read and comment on planning applications. Using these portals I review weekly all new planning applications in each local authority. The vast majority of applications have no implications for the Pentlands but there are some which do, and in recent years many have been proposals for wind farms.

Small applications for single wind turbines might have 20-30 documents to consider and large wind farms could have hundreds of documents; some are so large that they are put on a CD. On one occasion I had to visit a local library where four volumes each about 2 inches thick were available for consultation.

Written objections to a proposal are more relevant if the arguments are based on the issues set out in the local/structure plan and any other relevant planning guidance issued by the Local Authority or the government. For example - is the proposal in the

green belt or in an area of special landscape value where there are presumptions against development? The final decision for the Friends to object to a proposal is made by a sub-committee of the Board, consisting of the Chairman, the Secretary and the Planning Officer.

Although wind farms have featured heavily in our objections in the last 6 years other types of proposal have been considered; recently we objected to the proposed development of a 150 bedroom hotel and other constructions at Calderstone, next to Hillend Country Park. The planners have since given consent for the project, subject to numerous conditions. It remains to be seen if these conditions can be met.

Our efforts have had some success and we have been able to keep the Pentland Hills free of any large scale developments such as wind farms. The large development within the Pentlands proposed at Colzium Farm (some 22 wind turbines each 125m high, base to tip) was refused planning permission by the Scottish Government and the proposed development of 17 turbines 115 m height at Harrows Law, Dunsyre was refused on appeal.

As more cases go to appeal the reasoning behind the reporters' decisions becomes available. This acts as a feedback loop, giving a clearer understanding of the criteria for objections that are likely to be successful which in turn leads to less objections being made.

The Pentland Hills are a great asset on our doorstep. I enjoyed a gentle 7 miles recently, my first trip out after a long break following a leg injury, and I am looking forward to the coming season of walks with the Friends.

The Pentland Way by Bob Paterson was published by the Friends at the end of September. The Way runs from Dunsyre to Swanston and the author seeks to inform the reader about who has lived in, travelled through, or appreciated these hills and perhaps been inspired by them long before ourselves. The book consists of around 100 A5 pages and some 85 illustrations, almost all in colour, and contains a detachable route-finding supplement with map. It has been published in paperback and all profits from the sale of the book will be used by the Friends for charitable purposes. The book could make an ideal Christmas gift. To order copies please contact John Stirling at j.stirling@btinternet.com or on 0131 449 3456.

Who is up for a Challenge?

There are 282 Munros in Scotland – climbing them all is a serious challenge to a mountaineer. *Slightly* less daunting is the round of the Pentland Trig Points*. There are 8 within the Pentland Hills, some easily reached, some less so, some at well-known locations, others at obscure places.

Here they are:

No	Name of Hill and Height (in meters)	Grid Reference
1	Allermuir Hill (493)	NT 227661
2	Darlees Rigg (448)	NT 065531
3	Marchbank (270)	NT 170642
4	Mendick Hill (451)	NT 121505
5	Mount Maw (535)	NT 141555
6	Scald Law (579)	NT 191610
7	Seat Hill (362)	NT 036519
8	West Cairn Hill (562)	NT 107584

The challenge is to visit each trig point and to write an article for next May's Pentland Post.

Who is up for a challenge?

Articles to the editor, David Syme , please.

Contact details on the back page.



A Typical Trig Point

Photographs, too, !

The theme for our 2017 calendar will be:

“Hidden Corners of the Pentlands”

Visiting these trig points with a camera could offer some unusual views of the hills. Photographs to the editor, too, please.

*Anyone curious about the background to trig points could gain much from reading Rachel Hewitt's excellent book: “Map of a Nation”

“App-watch”

Your unworthy editor does not own a smartphone, but noted these as potentially of interest to Friends :



Chirp! Bird Song of Britain and Europe £2.99 iPhone and iPad
(birdsong plus explanation)

Bird Song ID £2.99 Apple and Android (you record the bird’s singing and the app will identify it!)

Motion X GPS £0.79 Iphone (converts a smartphone into a GPS)

Outdoors Great Britain Free IPhone, iPad and Android (OS maps and stats of walks when linked to the phone’s GPS)

Wilderness First Aid £0.59 Android (Simple guidance with artwork for most outdoor scenarios)

Access For All

In May each year the Friends invite people to spend half a day in the Pentlands. Our guests are children from special schools and for adults with restricted mobility. All our guests have escorts, some are given the use of mobility scooters, and a snack lunch is offered in Balerno.

This May the event was held at Friday 29th, but preparation had been earlier. Esme Yuille, supported by Ian Combe (both of whom spent the night on site guarding the portaloo), and (in total) nineteen volunteers, contributing 166 hours to the event. Phil Rowsby and Malcolm Patrick were successful in obtaining a lottery grant for the hire of the scooters.



Thriepmuir on Thursday 28th and started much earlier. Chief organiser Stewart Watton the night on site guarding the portaloo), and (in total) nineteen

On Thursday blustery weather failed to deter the guests but succeeded in shredding both the gazebos! Walkers were able to dodge the worst of the showers. Friday’s weather was much better and escorts were kept busy all day.

Over both days 55 guests were taken for excursions. There was much positive feedback; as a result the Board decided to repeat the exercise in September – the Autumn Scoot.

Another event was a walk from Harlaw to Hillend, led by Margaret Granger on the 9th May for the Blind Ramblers — a cheerful group, despite the rain!

Focus on a Friend: Bill Rae

Who can claim the earliest contact with our hills? Probably Bill Rae, now a sprightly 89 yr old living in Colinton. "My mother told me that she took me to the top of Carnethy Hill when I was 6 weeks old," Says Bill. "I don't remember it, but my life-long love of the Pentlands must stem from that." Bill worked as a motor mechanic for Ross in Lochrin, Edinburgh. "My first week's wages were 15 shillings for 44 hours' work." During the war he had to do conversions on Humber armoured cars.



Bill's uncle, George Wallace, was the shepherd at The Howe for many years and young Bill would spend the weekends up there. From Tollcross he would take the tram to the Colinton terminus, then wander over the hills. He knew all the Glencorse families; the Hamiltons, the Barnes, the Ewarts, Hunters and Martins, and the Wallaces of Logan House, whose children walked daily to school at Milton Bridge and back. Bill is full of respect for his uncle and the hard life he led. From him Bill learned when to fish for trout in Loganlea – when the swallows fly low over land and water, and the Spartan diet at the Howe was often enriched with trout, as well as trapped rabbit and home-cured bacon.

Bill's memories of the 30s and 40s is sharp. He remembers a rare sight of St Margaret's Chapel in Glencorse Reservoir in the drought of 38, also a visit to the site of the German plane crash on Hare Hill the day after it happened in March 43. His uncle, responsible for the grazing on the hill, had to set fire to the heather to explode the many rounds of ammunition scattered around. "In the 40s," Bill recalls with a shake of his head, "bags of 80 to 90 brace of grouse were common at the start of the season. Not nowadays...."

Bill has a favourite spot in the Pentlands. Above the Howe there is a rocky outcrop with a cleft. A Penicuik miner fitted a strong wooden seat inside the cleft, on which is carved: "Peace, perfect peace" Sitting on the seat looking down over the Howe and Loganlea, Bill was in harmony with the world.

Bill's knees don't allow him to walk far these days, but he is proud to have passed on his love of the Pentlands to his son. Graeme lives near Aberdeen, but includes a Pentlands walk with every visit to his father. Taking the place of walking in Bill's life is tapestry, and the walls of his house are adorned with his creations. It is no surprise that his subjects are from nature: deer, a kingfisher, trees. He is an enthusiastic Friend of the Pentlands, relieved to find that it is not a "police force in the hills" but an organisation that does good. "If I were 40 years younger I would be very active in the Friends' work. I would like to encourage young people to walk in the hills, where they can smell heather in bloom and see the views from Scald Law".

We are proud to have you as you are, Bill.



The View From Bill's Favourite Spot

The Memorial on Hare Hill (OS Landranger Sheet 66 GR169622) to the four German airmen who died in the plane crash



“A Ramble Without a Sting in it's Tail” by Doug Clark

As John Stirling and I drove up to join the Edinburgh Natural History Society group on their Harlaw bumblebee ramble I had no idea that such an interesting and informative day lay ahead of me. Bumblebees enjoy a solid place in public affection as they are relatively large, furry and quite cuddly insects. We associate their gentle buzzing with summer gardens and flower meadows.



On the left a white-tailed worker bee *Bombus lucorum*,

and on the right a cuckoo bumble bee



On arrival at the start of the ramble, in Harlaw Visitor Centre garden, I was approached by the group leader, David Adamson, with cupped hands. This turned out not to be a Natural History group ritualistic greeting but an opportunity for my first sight of *Bombus lucorum* – the white-tailed worker bee. Clearly, not all bumblebees sting! A brief reconnoitre of the garden yielded no less than seven separate species of bumblebees – the wildlife garden is clearly succeeding in its aim! During the relatively bee-less walk to Threipmuir I was able to pick David's brains on the subject of our ramble. I learned that there are some 25 species of bumblebees in Britain – about 18 in Scotland. While females can sting, they rarely do so unless severely provoked. Like birds, bumblebees are often both region and plant specific – which helps the novice naturalist with both location and identification. The water level at Threipmuir was low so we could walk along the exposed gravel bed all the way to Black Springs. Most of the bumblebees sighted on this section of the walk were white-tailed female workers, *Bombus lucorum* – but we also spotted a few males of that species too. A highlight was when one of the group, Neville, caught a beautiful blaeberry bumblebee *Bombus monticola* in his specimen cup - thereby enabling the group to have close inspection. By the end of the ramble I was very pleasantly surprised to learn that we had managed to locate ten bumblebee species – including two cuckoo species, the six common garden species and the recently arrived tree bumblebee *Bombus hypnorum* – a real find! Unlike honey bees, bumblebees cannot be profitably domesticated for their honey stores – but are very effective – not to say VITAL - pollinators of a wide variety of agricultural crops. Thus they have considerable economic and ecological importance. It seems likely that the greatest threat to bumblebee populations comes from habitat degradation and destruction by (guess who!) humankind.

It is a pleasure to record my sincere thanks to David Adamson and the rest of the group for a very productive and enjoyable ramble.

IF YOU WENT DOWN TO THE WOODS THIS SUMMER.....



You may have noticed and wondered at these large “cobwebs” spun amongst the twigs and foliage of many trees, sometimes just a few, but some other plants are festooned with the grey-white material. Not Spiders but Moths are the cause. These are not cobwebs, but shelters built by the larvae of Moths of the Yponomeutidae family which holds the genus popularly called the small Ermine Moths, of which there are at least twenty-four known species in Great Britain. They are small moths with a wingspan up to 26mm and they usually fly at night. The forewings are white with five lines of pinpoint black dots and when at rest the wings fold snugly against or around the body to display a white ‘cylindrical’ insect showing the lines of black dots, unlikely to be confused with other moths. The popular name has arisen because the patterning resembles the ermine fur decorating the robes of many dignitaries.

The females select their host plant and lay large batches of eggs which hatch out as the caterpillars that then spin their shelters. When many females lay on the same plant the cocoons start to overlap and can festoon a whole tree in swathes of gossamer. The small black caterpillars use the communal cocoons as a refuge when they are not feeding and will eventually pupate in them. Often, if there is a heavy infestation, the tree or shrub will become thoroughly defoliated and look as good as dead. However, most do seem to recover. Apparently, one method of confirming that it is a caterpillar of the Ermine Moth is to touch it on the head, when it will wriggle backwards. If it wriggles forward.....!

The conspicuous webs most often seen in our locality belong to the Bird Cherry Ermine Moth (*Yponomeuta evonymella*) which is found throughout Great Britain but is more common in Scotland. It is specific to the host plant; the Bird Cherry (*Prunus padus*) which is an attractive tree, often planted, but naturally scattered through many of our woodlands. It bears pendulous spikes of heavily scented white flowers in Spring which produce bitter black berries in Autumn, much favoured by birds.

Michael Jones

Gardening Notes

Although the weather has not been great that has had little effect on the wildflowers. A mild and sunny April brought on the early flowering plants such as ox-eye daisy and red campion. On the other hand a lack of summer sun held back the later flowering species such as clustered bellflower, viper's bugloss, field scabious and buddleia.



Flower beds at Harlaw

There have been some success stories worth recording. The old honeysuckle at Harlaw which we found semi-buried five years ago, and trained to grow up the dry stane wall has had a great season. Also at Harlaw the herbs planted out in the spring have done well. It will be interesting to see how they fare over the winter.

The wildflowers planted alongside the herbs, foxglove, agrimony, bugle and birds-foot trefoil, are also looking good but, again, the test will come over the winter. The wildflower seed mix which was sewn at the Steading at Hillend early last summer has produced great results. Even better it has proved to be a very low maintenance option. The garden, with some help from the gardeners, is now putting itself to bed for the winter. We have no major projects for next year but will be planting a number of spring flowering plants, ie cowslips and primrose, at Harlaw this autumn.

Outside the
Hillend
Steading



Selm Muir to Little Vantage Path



On August 28th a ceremony was held near Leyden Old House to mark the official opening of a new path which links Selm Muir Wood to the western Pentlands. Councillor Frank Toner of West Lothian Council, who is on the Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee, and our Chairman Mike White planted a rowan tree – see picture. The event was hosted by Lesley and Stewart Barr of Leyden Farm and the Hilly Cow Wigwams. The path, from Selm Muir Wood to Little Vantage, was made possible by funding from West Lothian Council and support and assistance from local land-owners and farmers. Friends of the Pentlands volunteers installed the gates, boardwalks and signage on the path. The path is part of a plan to connect Kirknewtown to Little Vantage; and onward by the existing path to Cauldstane Slap and West Linton. Over forty people attended and enjoyed excellent “tea and buns” after the ceremony.

Dates for your Diary

Sat 17th October Autumn Walk: Falkland and Maspie Den

Fiona Black will lead a moderate 7.5/12km walk from East Gate Falkland Estate – Pillars of Hercules for coffee – Kilgour Crag – Witches' Cave – Tyndall Bruce Monument – Maspie Den and the Yad – Falkland House, then Kind Kittock's Kitchen for afternoon tea or Covenanters for refreshments. Meet at the carpark at the main entrance to Falkland Estates at 1030hrs.

To book for this walk please contact Fiona:

home telephone 0131 339 6644 or email fionab23walkers@gmail.com

Sat 31st October Tea and Cakes Day

11 am to 4pm at Harlaw Visitor Centre This is an open event, so no need to book. Children's activities will be organised in the garden.

Thursday 5th November 7.30pm Talk at Merchiston Castle School (for members and friends only)

Christopher Fleet who with Daniel MacCannell wrote the book "Edinburgh: Mapping the City" will speak on the subject. Christopher is well known to Friends of the Pentlands, as he previously gave a talk on another book he co-authored, "Scotland: Mapping the Nation"

Sat 5th December Winter Walk: Chesters Wood to Ford

Fiona Black will lead a moderately easy 6 mile/9.5km walk from Vogrie Carpark - west to Newland Rig crossroad - south beside a field to reach a wood – east toward Edgehead – south towards Ford – through Ford Glen to Vogrie House – possibility of Christmas celebration!

Book using Fiona's contact details as for the Autumn Walk

Editor's Footnote

I am grateful to all contributors to this edition of the Pentland Post. The next edition will be sent out in early May 2016. Members are invited to submit articles and photographs on topics likely to be of interest to other members. Please send material to me, David Syme at davidsyme@hotmail.com, or by post to me at:

14/10 Pinkhill Park, Edinburgh EH12 7FA