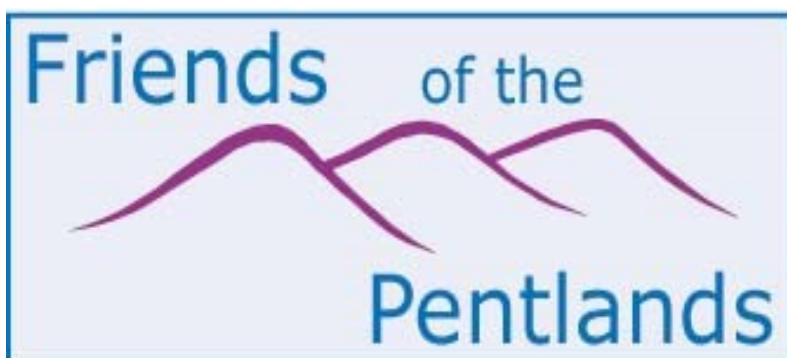


Pentland Post October 2017



Ian Combe took this picture of one of our perches above
Glencorse Reservoir on a rare snowy day last winter



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a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, registered in Scotland under:

SCO 35514

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

I would like to use Pentland Post to thank members for all the kestrel boxes supplied to me. We have had a very good year ringing 75 kestrel chicks mostly from boxes. Tawny owls also use the boxes, and they have had a good year as well due to the high vole population .

We are conducting a survey on behalf of Lothian & Borders Raptor study group, the main subject of which is Kestrels in the Pentlands, but we also find and ring other birds of prey. This year we have ringed 5 broods of long eared owls, 2 broods of merlin chicks, the kestrels, 9 broods of tawny owls, a few buzzards, 2 broods of ravens, and 2 sparrowhawk broods. We also found a couple of short eared owls nesting that have chicks but we didn't manage to ring any as we ran out of time.

Thanks again for your help; it's much appreciated.

Graham Anderson
Trees and Woodlands Officer
City Of Edinburgh Council.
Forestry & Natural Heritage

One of our kestrel boxes, this one
containing 7 eggs



Dear Editor,

As a member of a litter-picking team I was at Harlaw to "pick" before the Access for All event. I was really impressed at how good the Harlaw Wildlife Garden looked; much cared for, with lots of thought for its purpose and presentation. The herb bed looks as if it will be a thriving success. Bob, as one of the original gardeners, planters and pond renovators, would be delighted to see it looking in such good order.

I would like to congratulate and thank the team of Harlaw gardeners for all the work they do to make the garden such a success.

Maggie Paterson, Life Member

**Editor's Note: As Ian Combe celebrated his 65th birthday this summer I asked him to pen this issue's View from Scald Law. His account of a kayak adventure may have little to do with our hills, but shows his taste for adventure and sense of humour.
Belated Happy Birthday, Ian!**

EPIC BIRTHDAY VENTURE

To celebrate a significant birthday a kayak trip round the Bass Rock was planned with my son Dougie and son-in-law Rich. The day arrived and it was sunny, mild, if a bit breezy.....Lee our cool and trusted guide*, assured us....“this would not be a problem”.....easy for him to say, he did not even feel the need to wear a wet suit. We set off tentatively from the far end of East Sands and after 20 mins we respected his suggestion to give the Bass a miss, given the swell, so instead we headed for Craigleith Island, where we rested out of the wind and were greeted by a couple of seals and some puffins of course. Rich and I were already taking bets to see who would keel over first, my limited sea kayak prowess was showing and indeed for the first few hours I just had to stare straight ahead, rather than risk looking back at the views. In reality I had exaggerated my skills, had never been out of my depth, and Dougie had very little sea kayaking experience at all, and he was therefore really struggling, I knew this by his wild and colourful language. Indeed I will need to watch my back in the coming months as he has promised to exact some form of revenge.

Then another much needed rest in the lee of the Lamb Island** was enjoyed with fine close up views of guillemots, razorbills, cormorants and shags. Lamb is an uninhabited chunk of volcanic rock which in 2009 was purchased for £30,000 by Uri Geller, the self-styled psychic/ bender of cutlery. His most recent plan is to carry out an archaeological dig in 2019 in line with his many claims which include that the island is one of the most significant sites in the UK with links to King Arthur, Robert the Bruce and the ancient kings of Ireland, and that an exiled Egyptian princess buried gold and jewels in its depths thousands of years ago. However he is correct in thinking that the island like the Bass, is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and he would require consent to dig from Scottish Natural Heritage, in addition to planning permission from a local authority, and a Habitats Regulations Appraisal to determine if it would affect breeding seabirds***



Ian riding the swell,
with North Berwick
and the Law in the
background

Anyway we soon had to get a bend on and another long paddle brought us into the tiny bay on the east side of Fidra Island, when each of us experienced the "wobbles" as our legs recovered from the cramped cockpits. Our food and rehydration was accompanied by the harsh cries and smells of mainly herring gulls and their now large chicks, and then we had a stroll up to the high point of the island by the fine lighthouse and with amazing views in all directions. The going was not so tough heading back, the swell was now in our favour and we were closer in to the shore, and could relax a bit and ponder our approach to the 20 or so small sailing boats just outside the harbour. We arrived safely back at our starting point some 5 hours later. Glimpsing at the heavy swell over by the Bass, we realised we had made a good decision right enough; we might have been still all at sea out there!

Our various aches and pains would be with us for a day or so, while Dougie, the part-time rock drummer, was the only one of us not to suffer blisters on his hands. This was indeed a swell and memorable day, with some fantastic bird-watching opportunities on three separate colonies of seabirds. Nobody got wet, and we ended up with five-star fish suppers at the North Berwick chippy.

Notes:

* All the gear and our guide were provided by Edinburgh based “Epic Ventures” and come highly recommended.

****** During a work party tasked with cutting tree mallow three years ago on the Lamb we did indeed discover a hidden cache of bent spoons.....aye it is beyond belief!

***It is unlikely that Mr Geller will be in a position to bend any of these rules.

(Did you spot the spoonerism?)

[illegible]

Margaret Granger reports:

On 15th July 2017 at the Ramblers Roadshow at Dynamic Earth, Arthur McKenzie much loved throughout Lothian area was recognised as a special 'fantastic' volunteer for his outstanding contribution to Ramblers Scotland Lothian & Borders Area. As everyone will know he is a lifelong walker, a walk leader who has also trained to lead and accompany blind walkers, this in addition to his path maintenance workdays contribution to Friends of the Pentlands and the Midlothian Ranger Service. It was a great pleasure to be present to witness him receive his award certificate

from Ben Dolphin (the self-professed nature nut, hill-walker and blogger) who in March was appointed President of Ramblers Scotland

It's Our Arthur!



Friends member Mary Hayward (pictured) has written a book for walkers in south-east Scotland. "Walks on the Wildside" describes 28 walks with fine pictures, nature notes and good advice for that post-walk coffee stop.

Available on www.amazon.co.uk at £14.99

ACCESS FOR ALL 26-27 May 17



Four electric scooters lined up at Threipmuir to take our guests around the local area

Organiser Esmee Yuille gives the stats

20 pupils and 11 staff from Braidburn and Woodlands schools were at Threipmuir to walk round the moss beds with 2 escorts. Afterwards they went down to the Balerno Church Hall where 3 Tea & Cakes ladies served sandwich lunches donated by the Scotmid Co-op to them.

21 persons used our scooters over the 2 days; they were accompanied by 14 relatives and friends, and each had an escort. All participants and volunteers had sandwich lunches courtesy of a grant from the Co op.

21 volunteers gave approximately 120 hours of help over both days. Local farmer Andrew Barr kindly (once again) stored the scooters and charged the batteries overnight.

The excellent weather helped a little this year.....



En route to Harlaw for a cuppa in shorts and sun visor weather

The organiser thanks her team

I know our Chairman has expressed **his** thanks to you, but I also have to let you know of **my** appreciation of how wholeheartedly each one of you tackled all the tasks asked of you. It is because of this team-work that the event is such a happy success, although the weather this year did help a little.

So, once again, to John (Sec) for taking responsibility for the Centre, to the gazebo constructors, to the school escorts, to the hall dinner ladies, to the Centre hostesses and helpers, to the go-fors, scooter shifters, scooter guards, escorts, chauffeurs and those who stepped in at the last minute, my sincere and heartfelt thanks.

Esmee

Overview: Reservoirs and Lochs in the Pentland Hills

Part 1: Reservoirs Controlled By City of Edinburgh Council (CEC)

Information given by Angus MacDonald of CEC Flood Prevention Scheme

The reservoirs that CEC Flood Prevention own and maintain are **Harperrig, Harlaw** and **Threipmuir**. These were all originally constructed in the 1840s-50s as compensation flow reservoirs for the mills along the Water of Leith, but have more recently been used primarily as flood storage reservoirs (by CEC for the past ten years and by Scottish Water before that).

Flood storage reservoirs are basically holding areas for the rainfall run-off from the (obviously sizeable) Pentland Hills catchment area – being able to store run-off at the reservoirs allows us a significant element of control of the flow which makes its way through the progressively more built up areas of Edinburgh as you head downstream. As such they are part of the larger concept of the Water of Leith Flood Prevention Scheme, which also features flood walls and associated structures already constructed in the Stockbridge area (Phase 1) plus currently under construction in the Murrayfield area (Phase 2).

Reservoir top water levels are deliberately kept at least a couple of feet down from spillway level to give us a continually-maintained ability to store water during rain storms. Other (competing) factors have to be considered by CEC, such as sport interests (all 3 reservoirs are fished; many are swum and kayaked in; etc.), ecology and biodiversity plus the hydro power generation scheme at Harlaw, to name but a few – so finding a happy medium which keeps all parties happy can be a difficult thing to achieve and maintain.

Despite their age and comparatively simple construction (all three are earthen dams with a compacted (or 'puddled') clay core, built off the original river bed level, with masonry / brick drawdown towers – and almost all of the internal cast iron pipes, valves and workings are completely original and still fully functional), the reservoirs continually go through their annual inspection with no concerns expressed by the independent Inspecting and Supervising Engineers, thanks to the ongoing care and maintenance by CEC Flood Prevention.



A tranquil scene at Bonaly Reservoir

We also own and maintain **Bonaly** reservoir, which is of similar construction, although Bonaly is not linked to a flood prevention scheme.

Editor's Note: I intend to write on the Pentlands' other reservoirs and lochs in future editions. Any information from members would be appreciated



Where am I?

Do you recognise this
Pentlands scene?

Answer on Page 12

A walk in the footsteps of Wilfred Owen

by Margaret Granger

Craiglockhart War Hospital Field Club organised activities to help “shell-shocked” officers on a road to recovery. On 10 August 1917 Wilfred Owen and others took a walk in our hills, having travelled by train to Balerno. Exactly 100 years later Neil McLennan, historian, led a walk retracing part of that route via Bavelaw Castle, Green Cleuch, Loganlee Waterfall, Habbie’s Howe and Glencorse Reservoir. Whereas Wilfred’s field group concluded the day via Bonaly and Colinton we traversed Maiden’s Cleuch to Harlaw. Neil, Chair of Wilfred Owen Edinburgh 1917-2017, has been researching Owen’s time in Edinburgh for 10 years and very engagingly shared his depth of knowledge, enthusiasm and passion for the subject, so that it made for a memorable day. Of additional interest was an optional writing workshop led by Helen Boden, poet. At Helen’s behest we walked in silence down the edge of Glencorse Reservoir providing ‘mindfulness’ time to raise our awareness of smaller details in the beauty of the surroundings. The good news for anyone interested in War poets, WWII history, poetry or creative writing, is that the experience will be replicated on 21st October 2017, another anniversary of the Field Club outing in our hills. You will be enlightened. Book at: PentlandHills@edinburgh.gov.uk

Want to Live Longer? Join a Work Team!

Reference: <https://bluezones.com>

The “Blue Zones” are places in the world identified in a study of world human longevity. The communities where people live longer than the rest of us (in Sardinia, Okinawa, Costa Rica, California and Greece) have several common factors: mountainous terrain, non-smoking, social activity, close family relations, strong faith and “constant moderate physical activity.” Active membership of Friends of the Pentlands ticks several of these boxes. Can you think of a better reason to join one of our work teams?

A Pentland Way Log by Iain Morrice

1st June: John Surtees led the first of the walks on The Pentland Way from Swanston to Flotterstone. The weather was kind to us as we started from Swanston but not before we had our John Surtees coffee stop in The Swanston golf club. The 5 of us headed up from Swanston car park stopping at the Friends arboretum to inspect the lovely trees we planted. It was then upwards and onwards to the top of Caerketton with the good weather holding. We dropped down, then up Allermuir where the usual strong wind made us realise it was a Scottish summer's day.

At the summit we took a lovely selfie but did not hang about due to the cold wind. We headed down The Way to the old track on which soldiers used to commute between Redford and Glencorse barracks. We continued on The Way which now has lots of Friends-built sleeper bridges to the old filter beds in The Glen at Glencorse Reservoir. It was then a short walk along to Flotterstone and a welcome shandy at the Inn.

7th June: Hamish Clark led the 2nd walk. This one was starting at Flotterstone and finishing at Carlops village, involving the hardest part of The Way with 2400ft of ascent. The weather was glorious as the group headed upwards towards the peak of Turnhouse Hill which is a fair old climb for the first top. As we climbed higher the wind got stronger and when we reached the top you could hardly stand up straight, although the sky was blue with no clouds - a strange Scottish summer's day again. We continued on towards Carnethy Hill, struggling in the very strong wind. We managed a wee stop for coffee keeping low out of the wind but didn't hang about. Leaving Carnethy, we continued on to the next hill, Scald Law, to stop for lunch and catch our breath before heading to East then West Kip. The fierce wind really was impressive and we were glad to reach lower ground as we made our way towards The Font Stane and the beautifully-named Scroggy Hill.

It was a strange feeling on the feet as we walked on the tarmac road at Ninemileburn after the soft hill/moor ground and we were so looking forward to a well earned shandy. Hamish and Andrew got worried when I told them about the time I took runners from Balerno to Carlops for a beer only to find The Allan Ramsay hotel CLOSED!!!

We continued along the old road towards Carlops village enjoying the sunshine and the now wind-free air. We emerged onto Carlops bridge admiring the spectacular view of the river Esk in full flow due to the torrential rain the previous day. The pub was not closed, so we enjoyed a well-earned shandy, talking about our amazing walk and Hamish's antique 1980s mobile phone.

28th August: The rescheduled 3rd section walk on The Pentland Way took place on this Monday. Ten of us met with leader David Syme at the Witches' Leap car park in Carlops village for the planned walk to Dolphinton. The weather was fine as we started our walk with the forecast for rain later in the day weighing heavily on our minds. The route is the lowest-level section of The Way and certainly the easiest to walk compared to the other two we did previously.

Soon after Carlops we passed the lovely valley of Hollow Haugh which is still home to one of the few remaining WW 2 hutted villages in Scotland. We then saw the bonny Icelandic ponies enjoying a gallop around their fields. The flattish terrain let us make good time as we all ambled along blethering and catching up. We experienced a strong west wind as we passed through Windy Gowl (well named). This part of the route follows the old Roman road so it's pretty much straight with a few small bends.

As we approached picturesque Medwyn House our minds turned to coffee and tea and we decided to make a stop at our arboretum and the prehistoric burial cists, just west of the clubhouse of West Linton Golf Club. This is a lovely spot to stop and enjoy the scenery as there are two of our perches there to rest on, and leaflets to explain the trees. We caught sight of sitka deer in the woods opposite the clubhouse car park, very different from the normal roe you will see.

Off we headed on the tarmac road that dissects the golf course until we branched left on the track up the picturesque valley with prehistoric cairns on the right. We made a decision to break for lunch as we approached the sheep fank at Ferniehaugh to shelter from the driving rain which had just blown in. We hunkered behind a dike to enjoy our lunch then put on head-to-toe rainwear for the descent to Garvald and on towards the main A702 to catch the early bus back to Carlops. There were few takers for Andrew's suggestion of a shandy, perhaps because walkers were more interested in a warm shower than a cold drink!

This section offered a great walk with fine scenery; one I would thoroughly recommend even for people who don't do strenuous walks. Please take one of our excellent Pentland Hills maps with you so you can follow the route, and a copy of The Pentlands Way so that you can learn about its history.



Andrew, Barbara,
John, Alison and Iain
pause for a picture
on the summit of
Allermuir.

The cold wind soon
had them moving to
lower ground!

Work parties improve the route between Crosswood and Dolphinton



All smiles as the team starts bridge-building, possibly because the weather is fair, for once!

Bottom right is (once again) photographer Iain Morrice

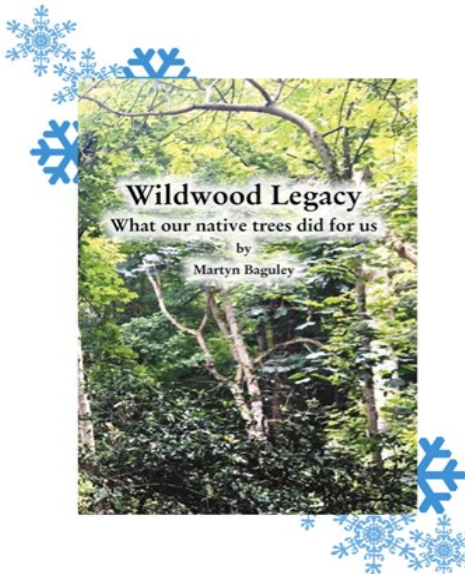
The teams from Friends, Scottish Widows and Balerno Ramblers installed two kissing-gates, two sleeper bridges and extended three boardwalks. They also replaced the ancient way-marking poles which give the line of the route



Answer to Where Am I? on Page 8

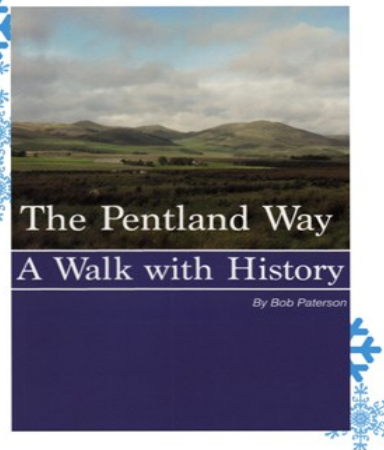
You are on Torweaving Hill, above Crosswood Reservoir (Sheet 65 GR 072573)

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Buy both of these delightful books for £15 + postage or separately £8 each + postage.
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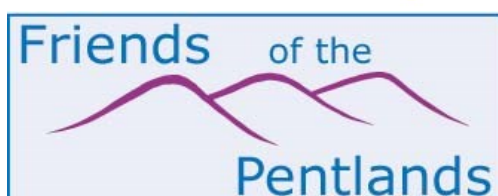
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