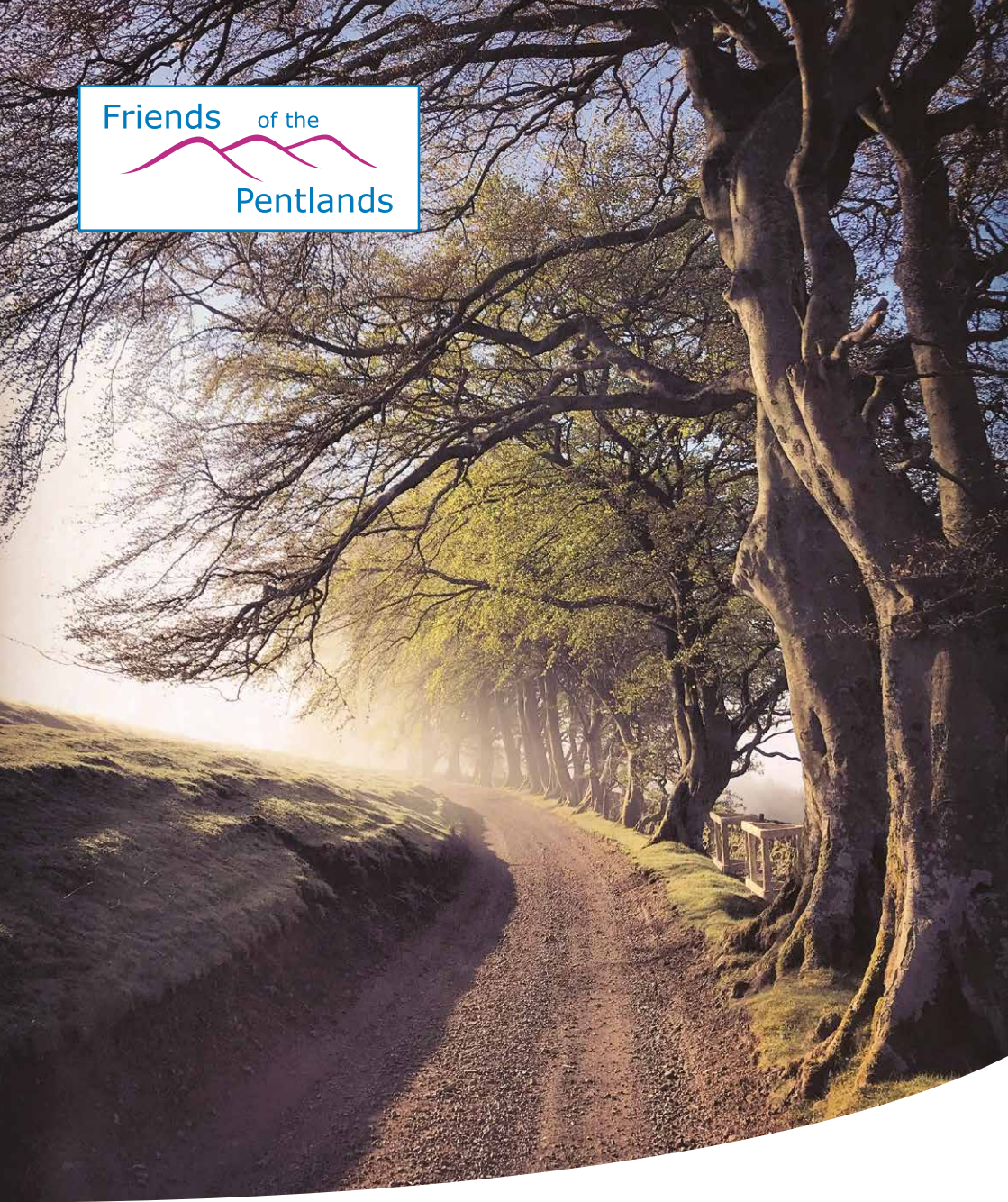




Annual Review 2019

The Friends of the Pentlands is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SC035514) which exists:

- To protect and enhance the natural beauty and upland character of the Pentland Hills, its waters and surrounding countryside
- To protect and enhance the cultural heritage and public amenities of the area
- To promote the quality of life of those who live and work here
- To carry out environmental projects that enhance public access and biodiversity
- To encourage high standards of design in new works undertaken in the area
- To provide an annual programme of activities including walks, talks, etc.
- To promote appropriate planning policies
- To stimulate public involvement by means of publications, exhibitions, appeals, etc.
- To co-operate with other bodies active in the area

The Friends of the Pentlands welcome new members who share our aims.
For more information see our website at www.pentlandfriends.org.uk/membership/

Or contact us through Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/Friendsofthepentlands1/>



For more information see our website at www.pentlandfriends.org.uk

Chair's Foreword - *Hamish Clark*

I introduce this Annual Review with a mixture of pleasure at our achievements in 2019 and sadness at the loss of John Stirling at the end of the year.

There have been changes to the Board. John Stirling stood down at the AGM after serving continuously on the Executive Committee and then the Board ever since the establishment of Friends of the Pentlands in 2003. Iain Macleod, Olga Macfadyen and Iain Morrice joined the Board in the course of the year. Iain Macleod has agreed to become Treasurer in 2020, in anticipation of Malcolm Patrick stepping down from the Board later in the year.

Most of the leaders of volunteer activities remain unchanged. Iain Morrice became a work party leader and Frances Carnie agreed to become gardening team leader when May Le Sueur had to give up that role. As always the year has seen a wonderful contribution by FoP members and volunteers across a whole range of activities.

After much preparatory work and some setbacks Wheelchair Walks started in June and operated until September when the weather became unsuitable. This allows mobility-impaired people the opportunity of an outing on a mobility scooter around Harlaw and Threipmuir reservoirs, accompanied by a trained guide. The feedback had been positive and the service will resume in April. Congratulations to Neil Macaulay, Iain Morrice, Bill Lang and all the volunteer guides.

John Stirling's special commitment to working with schools saw him organise another successful Schools Access Day at Harlaw and Threipmuir. Pupils from Dean Park Primary School spent a day at Harlaw helping with wildflower planting, and four moth trapping and identification sessions were arranged at local primary schools. Linda Stirling again organised workdays for pupils from Woodlands School as part of their John Muir Award.

The important contributions of the Gardening, Litter-picking, Arboretum and Work Party teams are detailed later – thanks to everyone for their hard work. We continue to benefit from the significant income generated by the Tea and Cakes Days at Harlaw and the record-breaking sales of 2020 calendars. Thanks to Alyson, Linda and the T&C team and to David Syme and his sales team.

An obituary of John follows but it is difficult to convey the huge loss to all who knew him and to Friends of the Pentlands. Our thoughts are with Linda and the family.

I hope for a good 2020.

Acknowledgements

- Alastair Cowan, Eastside Farm
- Allan Ramsay Hotel, Carlops
- Allan Scott
- Andrew Barr, Harlaw Farm
- Baberton Golf Club
- Balerno Folk Club
- Balerno Ramblers
- BAM Racing
- Beatlie Special School
- BlackRock Inc
- Bob Barr, Easter Kinleith
- Braidburn Special School
- City of Edinburgh Council Natural Heritage Service
- Craigdon Mountain Sports
- Dean Park Primary School
- The Elm Trust
- Garvald Home Farm
- Garvald West Linton
- Gavin Marshall
- George and Janet Burke
- Harmeny Athletic Club
- Hunters Bog Trotters Club
- Karecole Livery Yard
- Lee and Carnwath Estate
- Malleny Angling Association
- Merchiston Castle School
- Ministry of Defence/Defence Training Estate
- Pentland Lodge Ltd, North Slipperfield Estate
- St Crispin's Special School
- Scotmid Balerno
- Scotland's Rural College
- Scottish Widows
- ScotWays
- Swanston Farm Ltd
- Tesco
- VisitScotland
- Water of Leith Trust
- Woodlands Special School

John Stirling - *Hamish Clark*



John Stirling's sudden death in December came a shock to all those who knew him and a very sad loss to Linda and all the family. The large attendance at his funeral was testament to the respect he had achieved through his many activities.

The massive contribution he made to Friends of the Pentlands went far beyond his membership of the Executive Committee/Board from FoP's formation in 2003 until 2019, where he served for long periods in such key posts as Chairman and Secretary. He demonstrated his commitment to the Pentlands through the time, drive and enthusiasm that he poured into a myriad of projects.

He was constantly on the look-out for opportunities for FoP to initiate improvements, often identifying new ways of involving and working with others. This he achieved thanks to his encyclopaedic knowledge of Pentland matters and the people who owned the land, earned their living there or had other responsibilities and interests across a range of activities. So many of us will remember John for the interest he took in our lives, his talent for getting on with people and getting them involved and for his love of an amusing story, joke or (often terrible) pun.

With John's passing we lost a special person and a towering figure in Friends of the Pentlands.



Treasurer's report - *Malcolm Patrick*

2019 marks the end of a decade and this will be my final report since, in accordance with our constitution, I have to stand down as treasurer in 2020.

I am happy to report that our funds at 31st December 2019 stood at a healthy £17,387 showing a surplus for the year of £399. Our membership income is up on last year's figure and, with Gift Aid, came to £4,657 compared to the previous year's total of £4,036. Our Tea and Cakes days raised £1,044 compared to £1,064 last year: in both years we had to cancel one day as a result of circumstances outwith our control.

No grants were applied for during the year as we had sufficient funds to cover the costs of projects.

Sales of 'The Pentland Way: a walk with history' book have now reached £6,062 against a production cost of £2,812, thus showing a very healthy surplus. Our other book 'Wildwood legacy' by Martyn Baguley had sales this year of £275, bringing sales to date of £3,276 so I am pleased to say that it has now broken even. Our calendars have again sold well with income received during the year of £2,735 against a cost of £1,245. Our administration costs showed a small increase this year of 4.5% compared to the previous year mainly due to rising costs of postage and printing.

Membership Secretary's report - *Rod Greenwell*

This is the eighth membership report for the Friends of the Pentlands under its new charitable status constitution. Since the constitution requires me to step down as a trustee after eight years this will be my final report.

At 31st December 2019 the membership stood at: Individual Life Members 69, Joint Life Members 50, Individual Members 107 and Joint Members 156, making a total of 382. We also had six Group Members and six Corporate Members.

Following the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in 2018 the Friends of the Pentlands introduced new procedures to ensure compliance as regards existing members as well as new applicants. As well as the membership-wide system, a separate GDPR protocol covers those members who actively volunteer in different capacities.



Work parties - *Hamish Clark*

2314 volunteer hours

Teams of volunteers came out on over 40 days throughout 2019, a mixture of programmed days each month plus additional days to tackle unfinished or urgent work. Broadly half of the time was spent on routine maintenance and half on path improvement projects.

Over many years FoP have installed many boardwalks/bridges, gates/stiles, guide-posts, cross-drains and side ditches that need regular maintenance. A programme of path inspections and a new detailed system for recording results, developed and operated by John Surtees, allows us to plan maintenance and ensure these features remain in safe working order. Likewise, newly planted trees need regular attention to check guards and support posts and remove competing vegetation.

The largest path project this year tackled a section of the historic drove road from Little Vantage to Cauldstane Slap (aka the Thieves Road). Existing sleeper bridges were rebuilt and new ones constructed (a total of 15 plus) to cross the boggiest areas. This involved some 'heavy lifting' to carry sleepers often long distances from Drovers Cottage, near Harperrigg reservoir, to the actual sites. The project was funded through a grant from ScotWays, financial and transport support from Pentland Hills Regional Park and FoP's own expenditure.

At the request of the Regional Park we built two new sets of steps from the Torduff Reservoir road. The first set improved path access uphill on to the former Torphin golf course; the second replaced a badly eroded section on the popular permissive path to Sanctuary Wood at Bonaly.

New signage was added and damaged or missing signs replaced on the Pentland Way, the 20 mile long-distance route from Dunsyre to Swanston that FoP launched in 2015.



Volunteer support - *Hamish Clark*

In 2019 we welcomed several new work party volunteers and our current total, around 30, remains at a healthy level. Many volunteers come out regularly, others more occasionally. Our large and successful programme of work is down to their hard work and enthusiasm.

We again benefited from the support of volunteers from Balerno Ramblers and Scottish Widows. A small group of Balerno Ramblers joined our regular work parties and assisted with various tasks. On five workdays through the summer a total of 32 volunteers from the actuarial department of Scottish Widows contributed 201 hours of work on the Thieves Road project, mainly carrying sleepers uphill and assembling them into bridges. Their support is much appreciated.



Litter-picking - *Judy Cantley*

320 volunteer hours – 138 bags of litter collected



2019 was my first year in charge of litter-picking and I'm grateful to the group for their support and advice. Special thanks to my predecessor Malcolm for a smooth hand-over and to Janet for deputising as needed. And of course to Maggie for cakes!

We made nine visits to Bonaly and four to Hillend this year. A small 'flying squad' from the Hillend meets has also been covering Flotterstone, along with the Boghall and Castlelaw car parks. We

enjoyed one group visit to Flotterstone, with free coffee kindly supplied by Café Express as an added bonus. A visit to Harlaw yielded very little litter.

We managed only three visits to Dreghorn before access was closed off because of work on the new 'resilience' water main. A later visit in September, with the Dreghorn carpark still out of use, found relatively little litter.

We also responded to requests from the Pentland Hills Regional Park: two hours in the fields beside the A70 yielded 20 black bags full of assorted litter and we also cleared a few camping and barbecue sites, mainly above Bonaly. Most campers leave little mess but sadly there is a lunatic fringe who pitch their tents, light their fires among the trees and leave broken bottles and toilet waste in the woods.

Most litter is concentrated around the car parks – lots of cans and bottles, sandwich wrappers etc. but more intriguing finds appear – a light fitting, a good quality walking boot, a couple of 'cats eyes', a Christmas tree (in August!), a large dead rabbit in a sack (kindly taken away and given a proper burial by one of the Rangers). At Dreghorn we picked among the remains of an Audi which had crashed off the bypass, and we retrieved a complete wing mirror and several wheel hubs from beside the A70.

We now have an information leaflet about litter-picking for prospective volunteers – and an updated risk assessment. The group has grown to 16 members, so recruitment is healthy. We are open to ideas for other places in the northern Pentlands where litter is a problem. Looking ahead, we need to do more recycling of the waste we find. Litter-picking offers an opportunity to raise the profile of the Friends – people we meet are often unaware of the range of activities we undertake. With an enlarged 'Friends at Work' notice and our new feather flag we hope to attract attention, followed up with our new flyers.

World Clean-up Day

On 21 September thirty-eight volunteers from seven different organisations marked World Clean-up Day by participating in a joint litter sweep organised by the indefatigable John Stirling. They covered eleven routes in different parts of the Pentlands and removed twenty bags of litter. Many converged on Harlaw to be rewarded with well-earned tea and cakes.



Gardening - *Frances Carnie*

150 volunteer hours (estimated)

In 2019 all the borders were weeded and maintained, each getting regular attention. The grass was cut fortnightly and the small new border just outside the garden was also weeded. One ongoing issue, made more difficult by the compacted gravel, was trying to keep the path weed free. We dug a new border up the right-hand side of the path to give it some definition where it was very wet and muddy. Whether the plants survive here or not will depend very much on the weather.

Wheelchair Walks - *Neil Macaulay and Iain Morrice*

After much planning and preparatory work the new Wheelchair Walks service launched in June 2019. Since no bookings were received for October, our first experimental season effectively ended in September. The Scooter was then put into storage, properly wrapped up for the winter with batteries removed for safekeeping. Our routes centred on the circuit of Harlaw reservoir and a good time was had by all. Feedback has been very positive, as demonstrated through repeat bookings.

Over the season there were nine outings and the mobility scooter proved totally reliable, with no technical problems. We now have a team of seventeen volunteers: twelve of our trained guides have now been involved in outings. Everyone worked well together to make things run smoothly.

For next season, we aim to maintain and improve the paths around Harlaw and Threipmuir. We are also looking at ways of extending the routes on offer, including the possibility of providing a new turning circle at the Robin Aitken bird hide at Bavelaw marsh. The 2020 season is expected to launch in April, backed by a new publicity drive. Please spread the word around – wheelchair walks are simple and enjoyable. A second scooter has been generously donated to the Friends and we hope to expand operations when this is brought into service later in the year.



Tea and Cake Days - Linda Stirling and Alyson Patrick

500 volunteer hours (estimated)



We held three Tea and Cakes Days this year, the fourth having to be cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances. Over the three days we raised £1043.82, a fantastic sum. This is due to the wonderful baking provided by all our volunteers but Maggie Paterson and Helen Aitken deserve a special mention.

The money has been used for three different purposes:

- 1) buying plants for Dean Park Primary to plant in the meadow at Harlaw;
- 2) buying wood for bird boxes;
- 3) funding the Schools Access Day.

We thank all our volunteers and also all the members who attend regularly.

Arboreta - Mike Andrew

150 volunteer hours (estimated)

At the end of 2018 I happened to mention to John Stirling that there were no maps of where individual trees had been planted in the five Friends of the Pentlands arboreta. John had a knack of getting people to do things, so early in 2019 I found myself setting out, with the help of others, to map out every tree in every arboretum. In the course of this I realised that we could make the whole project more educational by changing the information boards to indicate exactly each specimen was planted.

At the same time we decided to attach new tree labels, which proved unexpectedly difficult due to problems with glue. Hopefully we have now found a solution. The new boards include a QR bar code which people can swipe on their mobile phones so that all the information from our brochure pops up. Along with the brochures which are also available on site, this will enable children and parents alike to learn more about our native trees.

We also spent a good few hours clearing gorse and cutting back grass etc. at all sites.

Education - Dennis Smith

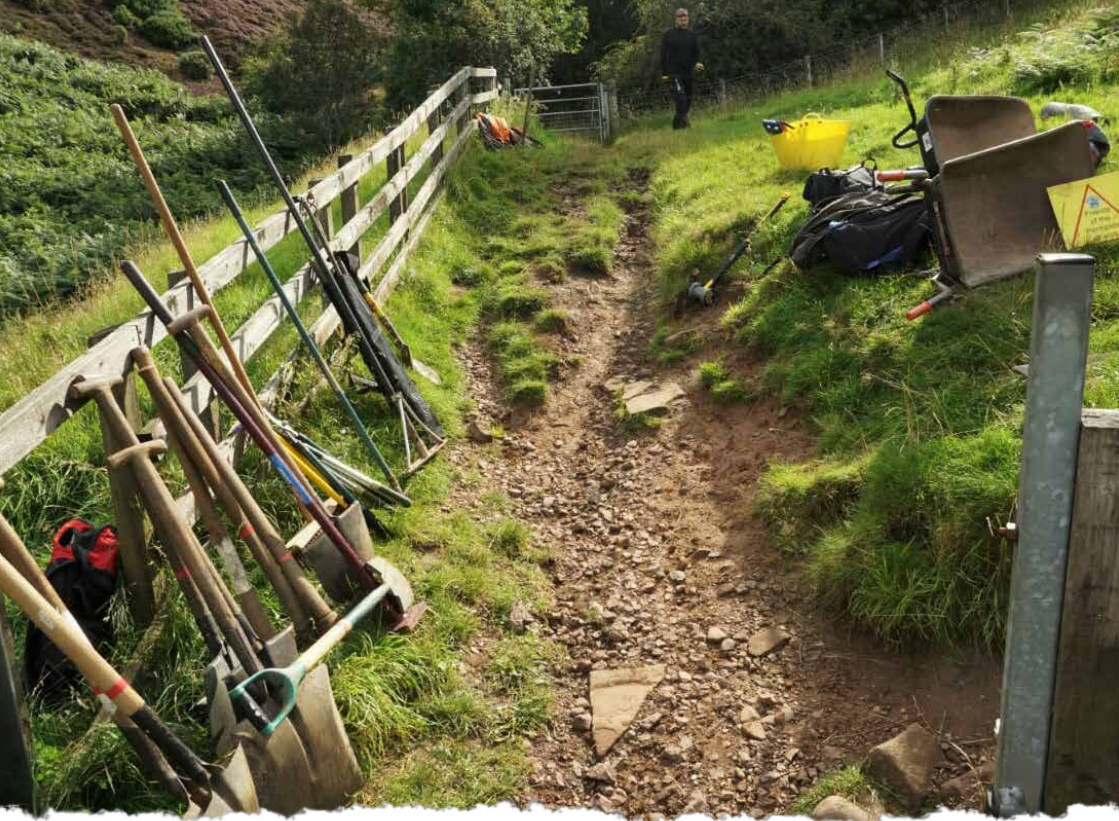
For the third year running Primary 6 pupils from Dean Park School in Balerno assisted the Friends of the Pentlands with new planting at the wildflower meadow at Harlaw Visitor Centre. Over the day 69 pupils sowed a two-hundred-metre long, one-metre wide strip with wildflower seed and then went on to plant 250 wildflower plants. The three classes took it in turn to sow and plant, walk and visit the wildlife garden: pond-dipping was popular. As one pupil commented while raking in seeds, 'This is very relaxing'.

The pupils were supported by teachers, assistants, parent helpers, nine volunteers from FoP and Meryl Norris of the Natural Heritage Service who provided invaluable advice and assistance. Thanks to David Syme for arranging an article in the Currie and Balerno News.

Schools Access Day

This year saw four Special Schools, Beatlie, Braidburn, St Crispins and Woodlands, attend our Schools Access Day at Harlaw and Threipmuir. A total of 24 pupils took part plus 18 members of staff. At Harlaw, Beatlie pupils took part in pond-dipping and built a bug box which is now placed in the school garden in Livingstone. The others went to Threipmuir to visit the bird hide and tour the Scottish Wildlife Trust nature reserve at Red Moss. Then everyone retired to enjoy a sandwich lunch at Balerno Parish Church with refreshments provided as always by Scotmid.





Conservation, Training & Quartermaster's report - *Ian Combe*

Conservation

The moth traps purchased by FoP were put to good use in 2019. Over two nights, a trap set up at Dean Park Primary School produced 15 moths which were identified with the help of Victor Partridge of the Natural Heritage Service as Map-winged Swift, Heart and Dart, Dark Arches, Garden Carpet, Brimstone and Silver-Y. We reported our findings on the appropriate form to The Wildlife Information Centre (TWIC) at Vogrie Country Park. At the end of the exercise all moths were released unharmed.

Work parties planted juniper at Hillend and a variety of trees at Sanctuary Wood, Bonaly. Under the direction of the NHS we thinned out trees at Redford Wood, Threipmuir. We also repeated our beating-up of the beech hedge at Swanston.

Extra willow spiling was required on the Lyne Water at Baddinsgill to prevent erosion of the riverbank but over-all the previous willow planting is flourishing. At Erraid Wood the annual check of bird boxes found that 20 out of 32 appeared to be occupied (63% occupancy). On the same day a tawny owl was seen leaving the Scottish Wildlife Trust hut there.

Training

In February all team leaders took part in a refresher Emergency First Aid course provided by St Andrews First Aid. Team leaders have been getting to grips with a new collaborative working system based on Google's G Suite. We again provided on-the-job training to various corporate groups from Scottish Widows, who will never ever forget the art of carrying heavy sleepers into the deepest Pentlands.

Quartermaster

A further stock of sheep fleece was obtained by John Stirling – at a Baaaaaaaaaargain price! We received the kind donation of a brush-cutter, so we now have two to choose between. A replacement tamper and maul were acquired, the latter with a welcome 10-year guarantee (some of our volunteers don't know their own strength!).

Path inspections - *John Surtees*

In 2019 our path inspectors checked the condition of countryside furniture and path signage, installed by the Friends and others, on nineteen paths. This involved long walks for some, particularly in the southern Pentlands. The information provided by these inspections on the condition of gates, sleeper bridges, stiles, waymarking posts and much more is invaluable in helping to maintain accurate records which are now embodied in a new asset register. The remedial and improvement work identified is then incorporated into our workday planning.

The Pentland Way - Andrew Marsden

Following improved waymarking of the Pentland Way, and given that it is five years since the publication of Bob Paterson's book '*The Pentland Way: a walk with history*', the Board agreed to establish a group to consolidate, develop, brand and promote the Pentland Way as a long distance path. Preliminary ideas include a Pentland Way web page, a revision of the guide, a Pentland Way app and a series of interpretation panels along the route. All of these would refer to geography, geology, natural history (bird, animal, insect and plant life) and local facilities and amenities. There could also be a digital log of Pentland wayfarers, both to record footfall and to develop a market for memorabilia. Some of this work might attract sponsorship.

Since the scheme was announced an inaugural meeting has taken place. But it is not too late for other members of the Friends to get involved – kindly contact me on andrew.marsden@pentlandfriends.org.uk

Publications - Peter Moore

David Syme who has been responsible for publications for the past five years has now handed over the reins to Peter Moore and will continue as Deputy Editor. Thanks are due to David for his commitment and for ensuring a smooth transition. The editorial team is also responsible for FoP material submitted to external publications such as Currie and Balerno News and the Pentland Beacon.

Two issues of the Pentland Post were produced in 2019 containing a range of features and photographs. Thanks to all who contributed, with a particular mention for our resident poet Angus Ogilvy. The Post is generally distributed electronically to Friends, with paper copies provided to some key partners. We plan to follow the same pattern in 2020 with publications in May and October. Please keep the contributions coming. Any suggestions for regular or one-off features will be very welcome.

The 2020 calendar, produced in a print run of 700, sold very successfully. For 2021 the theme for the calendar will be 'Favourite places in the Pentland Hills'. Photographs should be submitted by 31st July 2020 with a brief summary of why this location is your favourite place.

Facebook - Bob Douglas

In spring the Friends of the Pentlands Facebook Page moved to 'new management', with a concerted effort to publicise FoP activities and sights within the Pentlands. Every month we publish pictures from FoP workdays (how many ways can we find to make a drain look interesting?) and seasonal views (familiar and unusual landscapes, flora and fauna etc.) We also publicise FoP events open to the public (e.g. Tea and Cake days, Wheelchair Walks etc.) In a few months the number of Facebook followers has doubled to over 460, and the number of people reached on Facebook regularly exceeds 2000. Thanks to everyone who has contributed photos for use in our postings.

To find us, search 'Friends of the Pentlands' on Facebook or Google, or go to <https://www.facebook.com/Friendsofthepentlands1>

Friends of the Pentlands people

Office Bearers

Chair	Hamish Clark
Vice-Chair	Andrew Marsden (from September 2019)
Treasurer	Malcolm Patrick
Secretary	Margaret Granger
Membership Secretary	Rod Greenwell

Other Board members

Planning officer	Allan Ainslie Judy Cantley Neil Macaulay Olga Macfadyen (from September 2019) Iain Macleod (from June 2019) Andrew Marsden (to September 2019) Iain Morrice (from November 2019) Donna Partridge (to February 2019) John Stirling (to May 2019) David Syme
Editor	

Team leaders

Alyson Patrick	Tea & cakes
Linda Stirling	Tea & cakes
May Le Sueur	Gardening (to August 2019)
Frances Carnie	Gardening (from August 2019)
Judy Cantley	Litter-picking
Neil Macaulay	Wheelchair Walks
Iain Morrice	Wheelchair Walks
Dennis Smith	Volunteer coordinator & Annual Review
Ian Combe	Conservation, Training & Quartermaster
Hamish Clark	Work party planning & corporate liaison
John Surtees	Path inspections
Mike Andrew	Arboretum coordinator
Peter Moore	Publications editor
Bob Douglas	Facebook editor
Andrew Marsden	Pentland Way coordinator
John Stirling	(to December 2019)

2020 Programme

Further details, including booking information when required, will be circulated later.

Saturday 28 March

Tea and Cakes at Harlaw Visitor Centre 10.00am to 4.00pm. No booking required.

Thursday 7th May

Merchiston Castle School, 7.00pm for 7.30pm. No booking required. **Annual General Meeting**, followed by a talk on 'Thirty Years of the Water of Leith Conservation Trust' by Helen Brown, Manager of the Trust

Wednesday 13th May

School Day, Dean Park Primary P6 Wildflower Planting

Thursday 21st May

Schools Access Day, Beattie, Braidburn, St Crispin's and Woodlands Special Schools

Saturday 6th June

Tea and Cakes at Harlaw Visitor Centre 10.00am to 4.00pm. No booking required.

Saturday 8th - Sunday 16th August

Midlothian Outdoor Festival. Details at <https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/>

Saturday 12th September

Tea and Cakes at Harlaw Visitor Centre 10.00am to 4.00pm. No booking required.

Wednesday 7th October

Walk led by **Goff Cantley**. Booking required. Further details issued later

Thursday 5th November

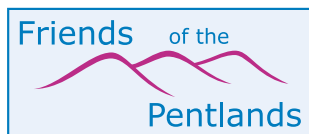
Craigdon Mountain Sports, 44 Biggar Rd, 7.00pm for 7.30pm.
Talk by **Robin Howie** and **John McGregor** on 'Walking Scotland's Lost Railways'. No booking required

Saturday 7th November

Tea and Cakes at Harlaw Visitor Centre 10.00am to 4.00pm. No booking required.



Credits:
Annual Review editor: Dennis Smith
Photo credits: Hamish Clark, Jenny Cowan,
Bob Douglas and Andrew Gallacher



The Friends of the Pentlands is a Scottish
Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SC035514)