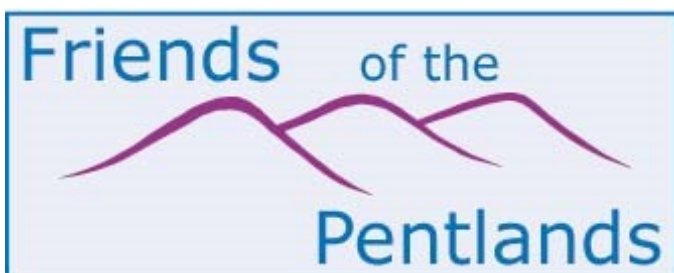


Pentland Post

May 2020



Donald Sandeman, Director of the 7 Reservoir Run, (and FoP volunteer) presents Hamish Clark, Chair FoP, with a cheque for £350 raised by the run for Friends of the Pentlands. Iain Morrice provides the security detail.



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EDITORIAL

Since the last edition of the Post, The Friends of the Pentlands very sadly lost one of its founding members and most staunchly supportive and active volunteers. A tribute to John Stirling was published in the Annual Report, however this edition of the Post would not be complete without recognition of the immense and selfless contribution John made to the work of the Friends. John Surtees (Page 3) has described examples of how John's passion for the Pentlands was translated into inspiring projects. Thanks also to Angus Ogilvy for his moving poem, "In Passing", written in memory of John, which was fittingly read to a Work Party on Buckie Brae in a moment of quiet reflection on December 18th 2019. Memories of John will come alive on every trip into the Pentlands.

Many thanks are due to David Syme who has edited the Pentland Post for the past six years, working enthusiastically to provide an informative and entertaining publication. David has not disappeared entirely, remaining a valued member of the publications team. For this edition, I have asked David to write the "View From Scald Law" (page 5).

I would also invite readers to suggest, and contribute features and photographs you would look forward to seeing in future editions of the Pentland Post.

Peter Moore (Editor) pdmoore55@gmail.com

Where am I?

Answer at the foot of Page 8



In Passing

(In memory of John Stirling)

Rest for this minute
to honour the spirit
of one who has left us
but still remains with us
in the wind on the hill,
the light-pool and shadow,
the stone and the water,
the path and the stile.

Angus Ogilvy Dec 2019

Tribute to John Stirling

John Surtees



It was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of John Stirling in December 2019. In paying tribute to John and his outstanding contribution to the Friends of the Pentlands I thought of the numerous projects and initiatives that he masterminded over many years.

Let's journey back to 2008. The location above Fulford near Boghall. Our small group is amongst a stand of large, beautiful, broadleaf trees but there's a problem, quite a big muddy problem.

Our mission is to reconnoitre the hillside between Boghall and Castlelaw to create a new linking path. We were optimistic until we came to a tricky section. With established burns, dykes and copious mud it looked as though our optimism might be premature. We needn't have worried.

"No problem" said John "We'll simply build a 12 metre boardwalk". Cue some barely disguised disbelief amongst the rest of us! In those early days the Friends' experience in tackling such issues was somewhat limited as were our tools and equipment.

However, build it we certainly did with John providing the knowledge and having put his admirable organising abilities to good use both with-in and outwith the Friends.

(continued on Page 4)

For weeks afterwards the woods echoed to the sound of rustic wood -working as a small but happy band of volunteers built not only a sturdy boardwalk but installed sleeper bridges, gates, stiles and completed way marking. A substantial footbridge, surplus to requirements elsewhere, was acquired by John a little later and with the help of the Rangers and landowners a delightful new path was created around the eastern edge of the hills.

The story is typical of what was to be repeated on numerous occasions over the years.

John was a founder member of the Friends and its Chair for 10 years following which he took on the role of Vice-Chair and Secretary for 4 years.

He had a real passion for these 'Hills of Home' coupled with great energy and an ability to be very persuasive as many members will no doubt recall!

The successful development of the charity called for a lot of collaborative working and it was here that John also excelled, bringing together like-minded volunteers. John's many initiatives include wheelchair walks, working with various schools, developing the Pentland Way, creating tracks, our Pentland Hills map, 5 arboreta in various areas of the hills.

John brought widespread support to the Friends from other stakeholders such as the Pentland Hills Regional Park, landowners, Local Authorities and many other groups who all had great respect for him. The Friends' profile in the community was helped by his ability to always see the other side of the issue and to promote the benefits of the hills wherever possible. His wit and sense of humour meant many a happy day in the hills even when the weather was occasionally less than favourable.

John always enjoyed the great support he got from his wife Linda and also their family. The Friends are most fortunate indeed to have had a founder member with such vision and commitment and whose legacy will be shared for many years to come.

John Surtees



VIEW FROM SCALD LAW

David Syme

Your new editor, Peter has asked me, the out-going editor, to write “The View....”. Having cajoled twelve readers to do this over my 6 years in post - now I know how it feels!



A View from Scald Law, by Bob Douglas

The challenge is to give a meaningful summary of what the hills mean to me. In a word, convenience. The Pentlands are a short bus ride away from my home and Edinburgh city centre and they offer opportunities for wild-life watching, running and walking, fishing and simply re-charging my batteries.



Even just looking up from a city street and seeing Caerketton and Allermuir gladdens the heart. There is no longer any need for me to leave Edinburgh in darkness, drive north and climb distant Munros. I can find plenty of hillwalking challenges on my doorstep. Instead of a Munro round, I might tackle the Pentlands’ eight trig points, or all the hills over 400m. How’s that for a reduced carbon footprint!



When I returned to Edinburgh in 1989 I was struck by the variety of terrain in this small hill range. In the north there are paths and tracks linking steep peaks and reservoirs, while in the south there are challenging, rough routes over bleak moorland. I love the whole range, so when Robin Aitken asked me in 2003 to

join a new organisation aimed at putting something back into the Pentlands I jumped at the chance.

(Continued on Page 6)



Since Robin's initiative, Friends of the Pentlands has gone from strength to strength under the stewardship of dedicated and competent men and women.

There is a role for anyone who wishes to contribute; we have experts in finding sponsors and grant-givers for major projects; we also have hardy,

hands-on volunteers for the physical work, excellent home bakers, litter-pickers, path surveyors and wheelchair walk guides. No-one need think there is nothing they can do! A useful but simple task, for example, is keeping topped up the supplies of free maps and brochures we lay out at various points on the fringes of the hills.

By acting as Editor and contributing in a small way to the Friends I feel that it has given me part-ownership of our beautiful hills, and, if they are my hills I want to conserve, protect and enhance their charms. I plan to assist Peter with editorial tasks, but perhaps now, without the responsibility of editorship, it is time for me to put in a more physical contribution by getting dirty in a work team.

Pass me a shovel, someone!

Potted Pentlands :

DID YOU KNOW?

- 430 million years old
- 32 km in length
- 5 Council areas
- 12 summits over 1600 feet

PENTLANDS ARBORETA

Mike Andrew

In 2013 John Stirling had the idea of establishing a small arboretum of 21 trees in each of the five Local Authority areas to promote the understanding and appreciation of our native species. During 2013 arboreta were established at West Linton and Swanston and three more arboreta were established during 2014



at Silverburn, Carnwath and Harperrig. Most trees in the 5 arboreta are now very well established.

In 2019 the locations of all the trees in the 5 arboreta were mapped. The 5 information boards have been

redesigned to include a detailed map, allowing identification of the trees and providing information on what they might be used for. The boards also display a QR code which can be scanned with a mobile phone to access further information. For those with no mobile phone, beside the information boards is a box with brochures giving all the history and information relating to all the trees. Each tree is also being labelled so that people can walk among the trees and identify them. Every year we visit each arboreta to cut back the gorse, grass and maintain paths through the arboreta to allow people to walk into our past, our native trees. Although trees cover 17% of Scotland's land, now only 1% is actually native. The arboreta help highlight this past.



(Editor's note—Why not visit an arboretum to find out more about the trees?)

Readers may have heard about a nasty accident suffered by Friend and Work Party Volunteer Rob Melville while skiing. He is going to be out of action for sometime. The volunteers sent him a get well card and he responded in a way that will strike a chord with us all especially when Covid -19 threatens:

"I was really touched and cheered by the card and the best wishes from so many Friends, reminding me once more that it is more than about path maintenance and tree planting but also about camaraderie and good humour, working together in the Pentlands over the years in all weather and seasons and while the work can be demanding, we would not want to be anywhere else."

Thanks to Rob and to Ian Combe for this item.

LITTER PICKING FINDS:

This hatchback car bootlid was literally unearthed at Hillend. I am sure there have been other interesting finds which our litter picking team would like to share with us.

A question for moss experts: How long had this lid been abandoned?



Where am I? Page 2

You are on the path between Allermuir and Caerketton Hills looking south towards Scald Law.

POET'S CORNER

Sheltering in East Kip Wood

I enter, on my hands and knees,
the half-light underneath the trees
through grey and rust,
crawl amongst wool tufts snagged on bark,
suspended filaments of seed and dust,
and, on a bed of needles, stand at last.



Photograph: Bob Douglas



There's scent of sanctuary in drying scat
and weeping pine, the pellet wraps
of hair and bone like entombed embryos;
a sense of aftermath around the rodent skull,
antler, melted candle, broken glass,
the bloom of feathers on the scuffed out track.

The fear-crack as I snap a root
insinuates the forest is the wood
that rests within the stillness of its space,
while, on its fringes, storm winds rage.

©Angus D.H.Ogilvy



Photograph: Bob Douglas

BOOK REVIEW

IS IT A MUNRO?

The Munro Society has produced a book entitled **“Scaling the Heights”** (ISBN 978-1-9996293-0-4). For anyone interested in the measurement of Scottish mountains it makes an interesting read. The Society’s “Heightings” team started a project in 2007 which looked at the mountains which were close to the line separating Munros from Corbetts, and confirms or alters the status previously accorded. They also discovered that the “summit cairn” is often not close to the highest point!

The book looks back at the original measurements and later revisions, then shows how modern Global Navigation Satellite System technology can produce results of accuracy to 5 cm. With excellent colour photographs the reader can follow the team on its expeditions and share their love for what they were doing and where they were.

Contributed by: David Syme

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE?



These Edinburgh Water Company (EWC) iron markers are dotted around the Pentlands, and can also be spotted within Edinburgh green spaces. Can anyone provide an explanation of what their function was?

CITY OF EDINBURGH FRIENDS OF GREEN SPACES

Friends of the Pentlands were represented at this set of presentations, the most interesting of which was possibly an outline of how an organisation such as ours might raise funds through “Text Giving”. This aims to capitalise on the immediacy of a positive experience, and the convenience of a mobile phone to attract donations via a dedicated text number - which could be on signs, information boards or literature.

A representative of the Fire Service emphasised the dangers of wildfires in green spaces, with wind, incline, and type of vegetation among the risk factors in determining the ferocity of a blaze. The Pentlands is rated as a high risk area.

Greening of spaces is being promoted through a new scheme whereby planting of trees can be sponsored. This is a green alternative to commemorative benches, with prices - as with houses! - reflecting the location.

The evening was also an opportunity to chat to Friends of Green Spaces across the city : Meadows, Easter Craiglockhart Hill, Hermitage of Braid, eg reflecting common shared concerns and strength of local volunteering.

Wheelchair Walks: Neil Macaulay is preparing to resume offering these opportunities to those with limited mobility, once the current Coronavirus restrictions are lifted. Watch out for email alerts.

Calendar 2021:

We are seeking photographs of your “Favourite Places” in the Pentlands to feature in next year’s calendar. Please submit to pdmoore55@gmail.com by the end of July with a brief description of why this is your favourite place. It would be helpful if photos were labelled with your name and location.



Before



Work Party impact at Torduff

After

AND FINALLY.....

At the time of writing we are restricted in what we can do and where we can go, and the normal activities of the Friends of the Pentlands are mostly suspended. Heading for the hills might be seen as a great way to get to open space and fresh air, however we have seen that if lots of people decide to do this simultaneously it can become a risk to health. Please take heed of official advice and keep a safe “social distance”. The Pentland Hills have been around for a long time and will still be there once we get through the current crisis.