

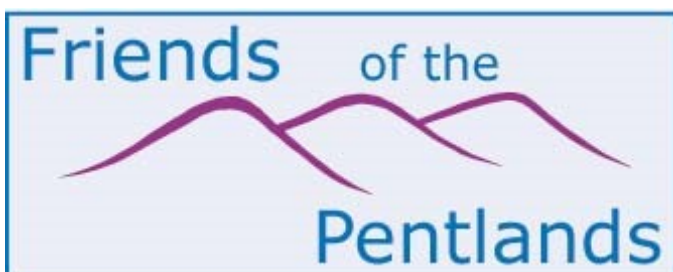
Pentland Post

October 2020



What a difference
a work day
makes!

Andrew Marsden, John
Surtees, with Andrew
Gallagher testing the
bespoke dog gate,
present their freshly
built stile at Fala Knowe
in a socially
distanced pose.



Friends of the Pentlands
is a Scottish Charitable
Incorporated Organisation
Registered in Scotland
Number SCO 35514

EDITORIAL

Peter Moore (Editor) pdmoore55@gmail.com

Seldom can a microscopic organism have had such a swift, global and devastating reach. This edition of the Pentlands Post takes a look at the impact of the virus on the Pentlands, the Friends and their activities.

Those fortunate enough to live on the edges of the Pentlands had opportunities to enjoy the facilities the hills afford, and no doubt appreciated them all the more. Some Friends have continued looking after the hills on their own.

Friends' activities on the Pentlands resumed in July, albeit in a restricted fashion, after easing of the Covid-19 lockdown. Litter-picking and work days are now proceeding, following rigorous risk assessments to ensure the safety of participants and others encountered on the hills.

Also in this edition, Douglas Lowe of Balerno Local History Society, reviews the history of waterworks in the Pentlands, in response to the photo of a cast iron marker in the May edition of the Post.

Looking to the future, Judy Cantley, Board member, who leads the litter-picking, and the programme of walks and talks, provides the View From Scald Law, and considers the involvement of female Friends. The Pentlands provides diverse habitats and leisure opportunities—how can the Friends and their activities become more representatively diverse?

Where am I?

Answer at the foot of Page

8



PENTLANDS in LOCKDOWN: what has (and has not) been going on.

Andrew Marsden provides an overview.



Lockdown repairs:

Harlaw garden planters before intervention

“I will lift mine eyes unto the hills” said the Psalmist, and this was certainly something those fortunate Pentland Friends who were able, did during the time of the pandemic measures. The restriction on all but essential travel brought an added peace and tranquillity to the Pentland hills, especially for those who were able to walk or cycle away from the hotspots of Harlaw and Bonaly. Wildlife flourished more than in most people’s living memory and unusual species put

in rare appearances, free from the intrusion of the human race. In a number

of ways the Friends were able to remain active. Lone walkers and family groups were able to undertake a modicum of essential path maintenance, members of the gardening group kept the wildlife garden at Harlaw neat and weed free and ad hoc bands of socially-distanced litter pickers found more than enough challenges to keep them active – so much so that one member, Andrew Gallagher, launched a litter watch Pentlands community page on Facebook. Unfortunately social group gatherings were prohibited (roll on



Harlaw garden planters after: As good as old? What an outstanding repair. Some moss growth will soon bring it all together.

the resumption of Tea and Cakes) but the use of Zoom allowed the Board of Trustees and our AGM to meet virtually and for some of our senior members to develop their IT literacy skills on the way.

ADVENTURES IN SELF ISOLATION Ian Combe

Confession time: many years ago my brother and I cycled from West Linton, passing the Golf Club and North Slipperfield, taking the track above the Pentland Way, north of Medwynhead. We turned off at the little bridge over the Medwin Water and cycled gaily, probably very fast up towards the little dam. Unfortunately we were confronted with the wrath of a local shepherd who lectured us on the consequences of us disturbing his new lambs, given he had been up from early dawn and was nowhere near getting his sleep. We respectfully turned back, learning a lesson I would not forget.



Intrepid Ian ventures out

I passed that bridge again only last year while checking the Tarbrax to Covenanters route and promised myself to hike in at the first opportunity. The perfect weather arrived for a revisit in March just after lockdown. The Water Board track (and the water pipe) bends and weaves back and forth over the Medwin Water for about 1.5 miles, a delightful, quiet valley, with various opportunities to pitch a small tent, but I chose a spot just downstream of the little dam. Never expecting to see a soul here, I did meet another fine fellow, behind the dam wall, bird spotting. He had seen a sea eagle the week before, but on many visits to this dam, he said, never another

human. Normally I would have offered him a drink from my flask, but his body language reminded me that he was also trying to escape from the dreaded C'19 and he did not tarry.

I had a plan to climb the odd minor tops in the vicinity: Millstone Rig was soon ticked off on the way to the Craigengar, source of the Medwin.



Craigengar

Photo by David Syme

The terrain in this wild part of the Pentlands is mainly rough, pathless grouse moor, giving a real remote feeling. The summit of Craigengar gives you an amazing panorama. There was a sting in the tail at the very end, as a quite new tree plantation, not on my ancient map, with deep drainage ditches had all but obliterated the final section of my route.

Next I headed west to take in the “The Pike,” which proved to be another finely shaped hill, and good viewpoint, but highlighted the numerous grouse butts just to the south. Finally a pleasant wee amble along the upper banks of the Medwin and back to the dam and base camp, and then copious hot brews, fillet steak and a generous measure of Glendhu (*other drinks are available, ed*). It was a very cold night, the milk froze and I regretted having so much liquid to drink, and the bad decision to leave my warm fleece and long johns at home.

Day 2 Started with a very early rise and jog up and down the track to get the feeling back in my toes, though once the sun came up and hit my tent I was reluctant to leave my sleeping bag. Very soon I picked up a good track heading up the minor top of Catstone, giving fine views looking down over the west side of West Water Reservoir. Keeping to the track going south I rejoined the main track heading back down to North Slipperfield and the Golf Club and a lift back to reality, but with a memorable 24 hour adventure.

Potted Pentlands

DID YOU KNOW?

The hills contain:

- 12 scheduled Ancient Monuments
- A geological fault line, along the A702
- 12 reservoirs
- 17 species of butterfly
- Over 100 km of paths

VIEW FROM SCALD LAW

Judy Cantley

After student years in Leicester and in France, teaching jobs took me north via Berwick-upon-Tweed and Glasgow to arrive in Edinburgh in the late 70s. Edinburgh seemed a pretty nice place to live. The new

job in international education suited me well - and the Scottish mountains were closer and bigger than those of my home county, Yorkshire.

At that point, the Pentland Hills were for wet weekends or short winter days. On our occasional sorties my husband and I often met rosy-cheeked old men with woolly hats and pre-Gore-Tex walking gear tramping the hills. Unimpressed by our knowledge of hills “up north”, they assured us that we would tire of the big hills and eventually return to the Pentlands. And of course we did – though it took a while!

I don't remember when I joined the Friends of the Pentlands. I didn't get very involved. Like so many hill-walking people I speak to, I thought the group was mainly about path work in remote parts of the Pentlands. “Men with mattocks” was a phrase I heard! It was a surprise to learn about all their other activities!



Carnethy Hill from Scald Law

Bob Douglas

A couple of years ago I was approached about joining the Board. On the “giving something back” principle, I agreed, though with some trepidation, having not been on anything as grand as a “Board” before.

The first Board meeting was intimidating. I somehow hadn't realised I would be the only woman (apart from the Honorary Secretary who was kept busy taking notes). I wondered how this had happened and how the organisation could respond to the needs and the interests of its female members and attract more women as active members.

Can we afford not to harness the skills and experience of half the membership? The existing Board members are impressively able and committed, as well as

being helpful and good to work with but, at a time when the benefits of diversity are increasingly understood, working to achieve a better gender balance would be a good starting point. There have regularly been a small number of female Trustees but one or two on a Board of twelve is not a good ratio.

Come on ladies, we need to play our part and get more involved in the decision making! (*see also on page 12 Talent search; ed*)

But back to the Pentlands,

Last December, on Carnethy, on a day of crystal-clear air and breath-taking views down the coast, we noticed a row of beanie hats protruding above the walls of the cairn and a slightly foreign voice said “We have lots of mulled wine and mince pies – will you join us?” After a moment’s pause, we replied “Why not?” and snuggled down behind the wall with the group of young EU-funded researchers from the Roslin Institute. They did indeed have a lot of mulled wine! Eventually we made our unsteady way down to Flotterstone for the bus. And no doubt they would tell their colleagues how they had met this elderly couple tramping the hills, GPS-less and in quaint old-fashioned walking gear, who enthused with them about the Pentlands....



Socially distant litter picking gets underway at Hillend in July after lockdown restrictions are eased.

Calendar 2021:

The Friends of The Pentlands 2021 calendar is now available. Priced at £6.00 or £15.00 for three, it makes an excellent Christmas gift.

Make sure of your copies now. Should you be unsure where to source one contact the editor to place an order.

And take your camera with you into the Pentlands to get that beautiful photograph for the 2022 calendar, which will have as its theme “Hidden Treasures of The Pentlands”.

PENTLAND HILLS REGIONAL PARK INFORMATION

DONATIONS:

The PHRP is publicising means of donating to support specific projects within the park, such as a recently completed footpath repair at Flotterstone. In addition to cashless voluntary car-parking donations via “ringgo” (<http://www.myringgo.com/login>), the park authorities also provide opportunities to give via :

<https://www.pentlandhills.org/get-involved/donate?>

TOILETS:

The Regional Park is consulting with associated local authorities about reopening toilet facilities. The team has worked closely with City of Edinburgh Council Communications team to produce two animations about outdoor toileting: “Foul Facts” and “Steps to Responsible Outdoor Toileting” which you can see/share on the Council’s [youtube](#) channel.

You can find out more about the [PHRP campaign](#) on respecting the Park on their website.

Where am I? Page 2 On the Crosswood to Sergeant Law Path, where the still living rowan tree on the brow of a hill provides extra reassurance that walkers are on the right track.

POET'S CORNER

Grouse

Angus Ogilvie



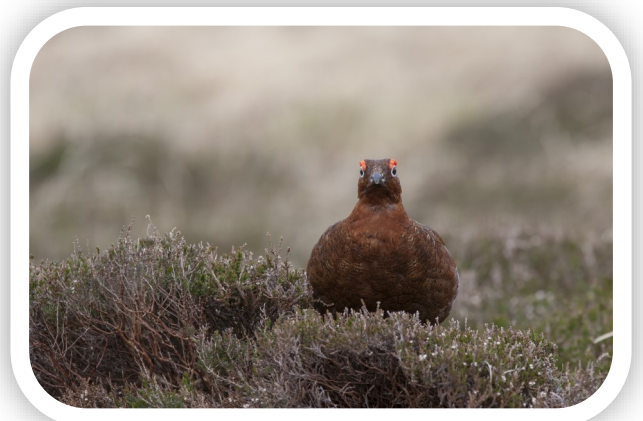
Fierce from the heather flare of wings
all hollow vowelled on the pulsive air,
the call made rapid
rattling down the laugh's long throat.

Low level grouse
blur over contours at the edge of light,
make sheep to flex their knuckle heads,
are loud as engines on the honeyed moor.

One... two...
the thrash released in duplicate
from coils of root
turns catapult of bird to double thunder
and the thud of death.
In camouflage an eyeball smokes
behind the barrels of a butt.

Grouse are the victims of their own unnerve;
are decoys of themselves to false alarm;
are seldom seen
until, like men condemned,
they beat the air
and charge the skies unarmed.

©Angus D H Ogilvy



LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

PENTLAND SPRING WATERS

Douglas Lowe Currie District Local History Society



A question was raised in the May 2020 edition of the Pentland Post as to what the cast iron Edinburgh Water Company markers were for on the north shore of Threipmuir reservoir. There are a number of these in the Pentlands, some very visible along the arm of Threipmuir reservoir towards the water house at the Black Springs. On the Black Hill just above the water house are some large stone markers. These marked the lines of pipes conveying water from various springs on the north side of the Pentlands into the North Pentland Aqueduct.

With increasing industry and population, growing from 68,000 in 1801 to 136,000 in 1831, Edinburgh needed greater supplies of “fresh sweet water”.



Between 1819 and 1869 around 260 individual springs were tapped along the north side of the Pentlands. This spring water fed into the North Pentland Aqueduct, which in turn fed the Edinburgh water supply through Clubbiedean and Torduff reservoirs and through the sand filter beds at the east end of Torduff.

The estimated amounts of water from these springs (Black Springs, Bavelaw, Listonshiels, Colzium and Crosswood) was 5 million gallons daily. This water would normally have fed Bavelaw Burn and Water of Leith, and powered over 70 working mills. Paper, flax, snuff, grain and waulk mills as well as tanneries relied on the water supply.

Under pressure from mill owners fearing that removing this water would seriously affect the mills working on these stretches of water, a solution was required. What they came up with was something which we can be thankful for today. They built compensation ponds/reservoirs at Harlaw (1848), Threipmuir (1847, enlarged 1890), Harperrig (1859, enlarged 1890) and Crosswood (1868) to ensure that there would be sufficient water running down both the Bavelaw Burn and Water of Leith, and into the Almond, even in dry periods. Today we can rejoice because we are beneficiaries of a pragmatic outcome almost 180 years ago which provided us with the glittering “necklace” of lochs that surround our hills of home.

ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOURS

Andrew Marsden reports

The partial easing of restrictions regrettably brought a lot of antisocial behaviour in the northern Pentlands, especially around the reservoirs of Harlaw and Threipmuir. We have seen examples of vandalism, fires, poaching and worse. I won't dwell on these negative aspects of Pentland "life" other than to draw attention to our Chairman's recent letter describing the measures being taken by the Pentland Hills Regional Park and Police Scotland and advising what we can do if we come across such behaviours.

Hopefully it will not be too long before life returns to normal. And the value of having the Pentlands Hills to enjoy as a social organisation – as well as in private contemplation – will once more be realised.

PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOURS

OUR JANET SHINES



Janet Clark, stalwart volunteer with the litterpickers, has other strings to her bow. Janet recently was honoured by the Scottish Orienteering Club, with the receipt of their prestigious President's Medal, in recognition of her 30 years of contributing to the Edinburgh Southern Orienteering Club.

Many congratulations to Janet who deservedly merits the recognition and whose unwavering commitment to the Friends of the Pentlands is greatly appreciated.

The Friends of the Pentlands: AN ORGANISATION WITH MANY MEMORIES....

The passing of our friend and co-founder John Stirling has created a huge gap in the Friends of the Pentlands, not least from his wealth of knowledge, understanding and experience of all things to do with our society and the area in which we operate. We talk of “an organisation with a memory” – John was that memory. As we try to gradually build up the databank of the information which John would have had at his fingertips we are putting out an appeal to members to share with us knowledge they might have. Whether it be in the fields and interests of geography and geology, history, natural history and wildlife, memories of distant projects or awareness of invaluable friends and contacts please come forward and share the information with us so that we can recreate that institutional memory and move on out of the void which John’s death has left. All contributions will be recorded and acknowledged.

... AND MANY TALENTS! Bring yours to the fore.....

Our planning work following on from John’s death identified a number of additional areas where members or volunteers might wish to lead on key roles. Role holders do not have to be members of the Board of Trustees. We are looking for people with skills to lead or assist in the following

- **Guided walk leading, to assist Judy Cantley**
- **Promotional talks, to assist Andrew Marsden**
- **Editorial skills, in particular to prepare the Annual Review**
- **Education, to take on further liaison with schools and youth organisations**
- **IT to take on the role of FoP webmaster**

Interested? Please contact Andrew Marsden (Vice Chairman) for further details
Andrew.marsden@pentlandfriends.org.uk

AND FINALLY.....

Please continue to bear in mind the coronavirus rules of good behaviour and keep yourself and those who live and work in the Pentland Hills safe.