



Friends of the
Pentlands

Annual Review 2021

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/>



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Chair's Foreword *Hamish Clark*

2021 has been a year of continued adjustment and progress as we contended with the ongoing COVID pandemic. Over the year our membership rose and our finances were very significantly boosted by donations as detailed in the Membership and Treasurer's reports.

When the lockdown at the beginning of the year was relaxed, our volunteers resumed litter picking, maintaining the wildlife garden at the Harlaw Visitor Centre, working on the path network and tree planting/looking after our arboreta. The annual path inspection programme was carried out and the teams produced and distributed the 2 editions of the Pentland Post and the calendar. Indeed sales of the calendar were higher than the year before and so increased the boost to the funds. I'm pleased to say that volunteers' contribution to the Pentlands have been recognised by the positive feedback on social media and by donations from organisations and individuals.

After the hiatus in 2020, our talks and walks programme re-started. We charted the "new" territory of virtual meetings for the three talks, which were well attended and, from informal feedback, well received. The New Year 2022 walk was the first in a while.

The work, by Andrew Marsden and his working group, on the consolidation and enhancement of the Pentland Way has been a major project. They have updated Bob Paterson's guide for re-publication in 2022, improved way marking of the route and are creating interpretation panels and a website. I look forward to the culmination of this project in 2022.

The creation of a new membership database which streamlines processes such as sending out renewal requests for annual membership by email rather than post has been a "behind the scenes" project with ongoing benefits. I am most grateful to Nigel Rose, together with Dennis Smith, for the time and expertise which they put into this project.

A noteworthy decision by the Board was to accept an invitation to become a voting member of the Pentland Hills Regional Park Joint Committee, responsible for the provision and management of visitor and countryside facilities and services. We look forward to participating in the Joint Committee's discussions and decisions. Also, FoP took part in the Regional Park Visitor Management Action Group which prepared an Action Plan and secured funding to deal with problems associated with the large increase in people coming to the Regional Park as a result of the pandemic.

Iain MacLeod has assumed the mantle of producing the Review in succession to Dennis Smith - I'm grateful to both of them.

My thanks to all who contribute to Friends of the Pentlands actively pursuing its objectives for our much moved Hills.

Looking ahead, I'm pleased to say that Andrew Marsden will become Chair in early 2022 when I stand down. Friends of the Pentlands can look forward confidently under his leadership.

Acknowledgements

- Adobe Systems Edinburgh
- Alastair, Susan and Jenny Cowan, Eastside Farm
- Allan Ramsay Hotel, Carlops
- Allan Scott
- Andrew and Catherine Barr, Harlaw Farm
- Balerno Ramblers
- Bavelaw Estate
- Bob Barr, Easter Kinleith Farm
- City of Edinburgh Council Natural Heritage Service
- Craigdon Mountain Sports
- Dalmahoy Estate and Farms
- Dry Stone Walling Association South East Scotland branch
- Garvald Home Farm
- Gavin Marshall, Treeline
- George and Janet Burke, Patieshill Farm
- GMP Print Solutions Ltd
- Harmeny Pentland Runners Athletic Club
- Hunters Bog Trotters
- Lee and Carnwath Estate
- Michael Good Fund
- Midlothian Ranger Service
- Ministry of Defence/Defence Training Estate
- Paul Campbell
- Pentland Lodge Ltd, North Slipperfield Estate
- Red Moss Hill Race Group
- Logan Estate
- Scotland's Rural College
- ScotWays
- Stewart and Lesley Barr, Leyden Farm
- Swanston Farm Ltd
- Tesco - Bags of Help Initiative
- Water of Leith Conservation Trust
- Woodcraft, HMP Edinburgh

Secretary's & Membership report *Dennis Smith*

To state the obvious, 2021 was another extraordinary year, for the Friends of the Pentlands as well as the world at large. Many of our activities remained in a state of suspended animation as the impact of Covid waxed and waned. People became dreadfully familiar with Zoom but also began to adjust to new, more restricted kinds of real-world activity.

But 2021 was also a year of substantial change and progress. When our long-serving Membership Secretary Rod Greenwell retired towards the end of 2020 no volunteer came forward to take his place. Dennis Smith, who had taken over as Secretary in August 2020, therefore combined this job with the membership role on a temporary basis, with Rod kindly continuing to manage subscription renewals for 2021.

Since existing membership data were held in a manual format, with much communication done by post, the Board recognised the importance of integrating and streamlining procedures. Fortunately one of our members, Nigel Rose, responded to the appeal for IT assistance. The first job was to convert the membership data into digital format, then to construct a suitable database for processing it. Over the course of the year, thanks to Nigel's sterling efforts, both steps were successfully completed. By the end of 2021 we had new systems in place which allow us to send email renewal notices to our annual members and, in cooperation with the Treasurer, to update their current status in the database.

This digitisation project allowed us to simplify working procedures elsewhere and check the validity of our data. Late in 2021 all members with an email address were asked to confirm the personal details held by the Friends, a process which turned up many obsolete email addresses and phone numbers. It also revealed some interesting complexities in the addresses shared by members and their partners. At the same time the working list of volunteers was cross-checked and updated. Since the database can generate customised lists of email addresses it is now easier to contact members by email and we have been able to pension off the Mailchimp account formerly used for this purpose.

Over the year there was an encouraging growth in membership. On 31 December 2021 we had a total membership of 435, comprising 112 individual, 83 life, 172 joint and 60 joint life members, plus 8 corporate and group members. One notable feature of the year was the number of members transferring from annual to life membership. As always many members topped up their subscription with a generous donation.

Over the year the Board became increasingly aware of the need to upgrade the Friends' website and Bob Douglas, our Facebook editor, kindly agreed to investigate options. Implementation of this work, and related IT developments, mostly occurred in 2022 but the benefits are now becoming obvious.

On more routine matters, our 2021 AGM was again held by Zoom. Three existing trustees, Hamish Clark, Judy Cantley and Andrew Marsden, stood down as required by the constitution and were duly re-elected. Nicola Fryer, co-opted as a trustee earlier in the year, also stood down and was formally elected. Douglas Tullis was subsequently co-opted and attended his first Board meeting in September - the first face-to-face meeting of the Board since the outbreak of Covid. There are still vacancies on the Board and we would be delighted to hear from anyone interested in contributing to our work.

Following the AGM, Helen Brown gave a fascinating talk on The Water of Leith and the work of its Conservation Trust. Two other successful Zoom talks followed in the autumn - Dane Love spoke on The Scottish Covenanters and Malcolm Murray on the work of Tweed Valley Mountain Rescue Team.

The Board continued to meet regularly, first by Zoom and latterly face to face. Thanks are again due to Swanston Brasserie for hosting our meetings.

Treasurer's Report *Iain MacLeod*

I'm pleased to report that our funds on hand at 31st December 2021 stood at £61,926 , following an annual surplus of £19,757. The main contributory factor towards this surplus was a large donation of £17,064 (US\$25,000) made by Adobe Inc., whose staff in their Edinburgh operation won a company wide competition to support community activity. Many of their staff had enjoyed the hills during the lockdown in 2020 and felt that our charity was an appropriate recipient of this funding.

The family and friends of a regular walker in the Pentland Hills, who died in December 2020, donated a total of £1,620 in his memory, and have agreed that this be used towards proposed improvements to the path between Little Vantage and Gala Ford.

We are also grateful for donations from several other individuals and organisations. Our membership income at £5,534, including Gift Aid, showed an increase to the prior year's figure of £4,621, mainly as a result of a number of new members opting for Life Membership.

A gradual increase in activity following the prior year's lockdown was evidenced by Project and Administration Costs at £7,792 and £1,825 respectively, compared with the previous totals of £4,000 and £1,539.

A grant of £800, towards path improvements was received from the Scottish Rights of Way Society.

Sales of "The Pentland Way – A Walk with History", which has been a very successful publication, rose to £691 during the year, and £1,450 was spent on a reprint, in order to maintain a stock pending the launch of a second edition which is currently in production.

Once again our calendar has provided a valuable source of income. It was decided to increase the supply of the 2022 edition to 700, and sales of these are anticipated to produce profit in excess of £1,600. Thanks are due to David Syme and his team for their sales effort.

In conclusion I can certainly state that our finances are in a very healthy condition and it falls to the Trustees to bring forward plans to expand and extend our range of our activities.



Work parties *Hamish Clark*

The increase in footfall in the Pentlands and the suspension of work parties during lockdown meant there was a lot of much needed maintenance of paths, such as clearing drains, repairing path surfaces, cutting back overgrown vegetation, signage replacement and repairs to stiles, bridges and guide posts. This has made up the bulk of the work undertaken.

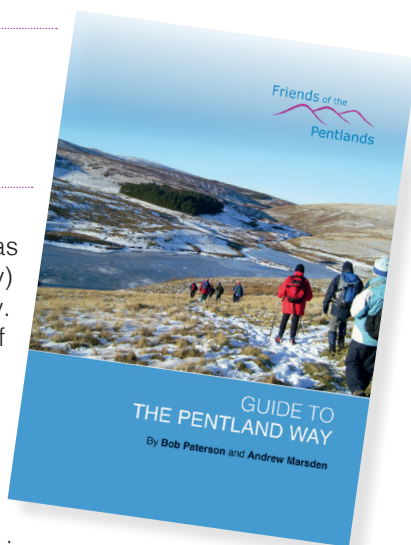
It was heartening to welcome a good number of new volunteers to work parties, most of whom had recently joined FoP. They inject new energy, experience and thinking to our work and replenish our volunteer pool, which inevitably has retirees. The help from Balerno Ramblers who joined work parties a number of times is much appreciated.

Thanks to everyone who has joined the 40 work parties in all sorts of weather and in some wet, muddy conditions. The repairs and improvements they deliver is much appreciated by path users and the Regional Park team.

Pentland Way Consolidation Group

Andrew Marsden

Over the past couple of years, a group has been meeting (quite frequently electronically) to address and redefine the Pentland Way. We hope that, by now, the second edition of Bob Paterson's book on The Pentland Way will have been printed. Re-titled "Friends of the Pentlands Guide to The Pentland Way" and in an attempt to aim for a wider appeal, the guide has been comprehensively revised with new sections on the Pentlands' geology and natural history and new circular excursions added to the walk. Accordingly, though Bob's historical narrative has been left unaltered, the subtitle "a walk with history" has been omitted, reflecting that there are other aspects to walking the Way in addition to historical discovery. The book is lavishly illustrated with four new maps and many new photographs, many from the camera of Bob Douglas, and there are four colour plates containing 48 thumbnail images of the flora and fauna to be seen along the Way.



Accompanying the publication seven interpretation panels are being created at various sites along The Way. These are each to have a "You are Here" map board and photographs and location descriptions linked by QR codes to further descriptive material on a Pentlands Way web page on the main Friends of the Pentlands web site. The boards to be placed within the Pentland Hills Regional Park have been designed with the assistance of the Park's Natural Heritage Officers.

At the turn of the year, new waymarking was completed – a major task thanks, largely to John Surtees who, in his garage, created metal plates and bands by which to attach the roundels to existing Scotways finger posts. The "alternative" routes to and from The Way (including Dolphinton to Garvald, routes off the ridge and Flotterstone to Hillend) have, similarly, been completed. The colour of the main and definitive roundels matches the route descriptions in the Guide.

At a book launch in late Spring of 2022 the work of the "consolidation group" is being described to key stakeholders together with discussions about the importance of The Way, its benefits (and drawbacks) as a public resource and our endeavours, over future years, to maintain it and the ecosystems through which it passes.



Harlaw Wildlife Garden *Linda Stirling*

After many months of Covid, the volunteers were at long last able to venture into the garden. We were met with a lot of overgrown plants and bushes and most areas covered in weeds. The group decided to work in the garden every week to clear the areas and when the grass was cut the garden began to really look good.

The garden has a lovely sensory and herb area. All the plants in these areas have been named which is of great interest to visitors to the garden.

We meet in the garden on alternate Thursday mornings and hope to begin again in April. Do come and visit the garden, it's a lovely place to sit and look at the hills.

Conservation, Training, and Quartermaster's Report

Ian Combe

Conservation:

A boardwalk extension was erected to allow easier wheelchair access to the Bavelaw bird hide. The Dulverton Hide is currently awaiting restoration.

Various work days concentrated on the cutting back of gorse and other vegetation encroaching on paths such as Boghall, Lowrie's Den / Silverburn, Carlops / Fairliehope, Little Vantage / Selmuir, and by Donald's Seat at Swanston ; in addition to the annual tidy up and maintenance at the 5 arboreta.

125 Scots Pine trees were planted on south east bank of Threipmuir Reservoir; and 60 hazel and 30 birch trees at Bonaly.

The more interesting sightings this year were: Cuckoos, sand martins, an osprey, woodcock...and a corncrake (Did you know : apparently the courtship song of the male is very characteristic and persistent, a rasping "rerrp rerrp", and is audible up to 1km away).

At Baddingsgill another section of path eroded by the Lyne Water was stabilised by using gabions and this in addition to the spiling support carried out in the last few years has made such a difference.

Out by Garvald by the Medwin Water further remedial work was carried out and our willow spiling project of last year has proven successful in preventing further erosion of the abutment of the bridge.

Training:

With the landowners permission we tried an experiment with sections of the artificial ski matting cut offs kindly provided by the Hillend Ski Centre on a particularly boggy section of path. This path is by Logan Cottage / the entry to Den's Cleuch. Using layers of matting, sheep fleece and aggregate stone this technique appear to have been very successful.

With our leaders Emergency First Aid certificate expiring shortly a further course has been arranged in February.



Quartermaster:

In view of the proposed developments at the Hillend / Swanston area FOP have had provisional discussions with Midlothian Sports Centre regarding a replacement home for our equipment and tools currently held in our “Steading” at the bottom of the Hillend Ski Centre approach road. Hamish and Andrew had a very positive meeting with the Snowsports Centre Manager who was optimistic that an alternative for the “Steading” could be found.

Additional purchases this year include : rectangular Gabions for protection for the Baddinsgill path; plastic cross drain units; and 2 billhooks (or as Arthur Mackenzie would call them- “slashers”).

Finally all volunteers that have entered the Steading recently have literally “seen the light” (courtesy of D. Sandeman).

Litter-picking *Judy Cantley*

No of meets: 19 Volunteer hours: 194 bags of litter: 104

This year in spite of COVID restrictions we managed to meet regularly from April through to December. Thanks to the late start, we missed some of the winter weather, though the December meet was a bit of a cliff-hanger, with a weather warning for ice until 9am and a heavy rain/snow warning from 11am. Fortunately our meet at Bonaly fitted very neatly between them.



There are 20 of us on the list and turn-out is usually between 5 and 10, which is about right for the locations we visit regularly (Bonaly, Hillend, Flotterstone, Harlaw). We would struggle a bit if everyone turned out every time! We returned to the re-opened Dregghorn car park in July as the major Scottish Water and Scottish Power projects finished. Swanston is visited very occasionally – the area enjoys a high level of litter picking by local residents.



As in 2020, changing COVID rules affected the way we operated: we tried to minimise any waiting around as a group at the start and bigger groups were split and given different start times. Some people offer to come “if needed”, which gives some flexibility over the group size. Sometimes a car or two would go to a different location

e.g from Hillend we could cover Boghall and Castlelaw, from Flotterstone a couple of people could tackle the laybys on the A702 etc.

We still marvel at the things people throw away – camping mats, carrier bags full of unopened food, a paddle, a pair of long metal tongs, a very useable claw hammer, an ancient wheelbarrow, a giant-sized wicker cup and saucer. Most notable was the smart red tent left beside Threipmuir full of the campers’ neatly bagged rubbish – with a note saying that the finder could keep the tent if they took away the rubbish. That story made the Evening News!

Our impression was that, although the hills were again busy in the summer, things were a little calmer than last year - still plenty of camping and barbecue sites to clear and still quite a bit of toilet litter in the woods but the measures put in place by Pentland Hills Regional Park (PHRP) team under their Visitor Management plan certainly made a difference - temporary toilets at the main access points helped

reduce the less pleasant finds. The visible presence of the newly-recruited Seasonal Rangers and the low-key involvement of the police, particularly around Harlaw at weekends, seems to have had a positive impact on behaviour.

I have to thank all the team for their cheerful commitment and support. For a special mention I'll pick out Malcolm for dealing with all the carrier bags full of recyclables, Andrew giving our activities a mention on the Pentland Hills Litter Watch Facebook page, and Joan for offering to stand in for me as required. Thanks also to the Regional Park staff for their help and advice.



Publications *Peter Moore*

The Publications team has again continued to work safely and productively in 2021 despite the ongoing Covid-19 epidemic. Apart from the twice-yearly Pentland Post and the annual Calendar which were published as normal, the editorial team is also responsible for Friends of the Pentlands material submitted to external publications such as the Currie and Balerno News and the Pentland Beacon.

Pentland Post

Two editions have been produced in 2021, in May and in October, with a range of items and photographs focussed mainly on the activities of the Friends of the Pentlands but also featuring other events and articles associated with the hills. Feedback from readers of the 2021 editions has been positive. Thanks are due to everyone who has contributed, through writing, photography and comment. The Post is distributed electronically to most Friends, with paper copies also provided to some key “partners”. We are also obliged to lodge copies with the Agency for Legal Deposit Library, and, as such, our publication becomes a part of the nation’s heritage.

Issues of the Post are planned for May and October 2022, in the same format. Contributions, from brief comments to more lengthy features, are always welcomed, as are suggestions of topics readers would like to see covered. Please do not hesitate to contact the Editor with ideas.

Calendar

The 2021 calendar sold very well, contributing positively to supporting the activities of the Friends. In the 2022 calendar on the theme of “Hidden Treasures of the Pentlands” less well known aspects of the Pentlands have been featured with the aim of tempting explorers beyond the more popular areas. Thanks are due to all those who submitted pictures.

In order to select the photographs we managed to return to a physical meeting this year, which all agreed was more efficient than last year’s Covid-induced online discussion. The calendar went to the printer earlier than usual, and perhaps as a result, by early December 2021 stocks were running very low. Thanks to Olga Macfadyen, Averil Sutherland and David Syme for their part in selecting and distributing calendars and to the Treasurer for looking after the billing and proceeds.

Looking ahead, the theme for the 2023 calendar is “At Work and Play in The Pentlands”. It is hoped this broad theme will enable illustration of the wide range of activities that take place in the Pentlands. Photographs, in landscape format, should be submitted to the Editor by 31st July 2022, together with a brief caption and note of the location.



Arboreta *Mike Andrew*

2021 was a quieter year for work in the 5 arboreta which we maintain.

Visits were made to Swanston, West Linton, Silverburn, Carnwath and Harperrig to carry out grass cutting, clearing tree tuber protectors, and general maintenance. It's great to see, with each passing year, the trees maturing and making each arboretum look very impressive.

A continuing issue is with the plastic brochure holders, whose lids keep snapping off, so a little thought is required as to how best we deal with this going forward. We had a very kind donation from GM Print Solutions which allowed us in April to plant 100 Scots Pine on the North side of Threipmuir Reservoir. I revisited the site in mid-January 2022 and was pleased to see that all the saplings have survived and look in great shape.

In November, with a further kind donation of 100 Hazel and Oak, we undertook a joint project with PHRP to plant these to the right of the top car park at Bonaly, as part of a new wetland project.

Overall, once again it was a successful and fruitful year and, with further trees in the pipeline for planting, we look forward to an equally successful 2022.

Planning *Douglas Tullis*

In September I took over as our Planning Officer from Allan Ainslie who has done it with great efficiency for many years and to whom our thanks are due. In terms of our 2021 Action Plan our approach to planning matters is to:

“Monitor planning applications lodged with Local Authorities or the Scottish Government to ascertain their potential impact on the Friends’ area of interest and, when necessary, to submit an appropriate response.”

Our geographical area of interest requires the monitoring of planning applications made to no fewer than five different authorities - City of Edinburgh, Midlothian, West Lothian, Scottish Borders and South Lanarkshire Councils as well as the Scottish Government which handles larger scale energy consents. The main cases in which we have been involved, or which we have been monitoring over 2021, include:

Slipperfield Quarry, West Linton – We have objected to this application for quarrying on a 35 Ha site north of the A702. A decision is not expected until after the May elections.

Rutherford Castle golf course, West Linton – We objected to this proposed development on visual grounds and a decision on a significantly reduced proposal is awaited.

Camilty Wind Farm, West Lothian – This reapplication for six wind turbines of increased height was approved in October despite objections from us and others.

Midlothian Snowsports Centre - We did not object to the proposal for a significant redevelopment of the centre for which conditional planning consent was granted in February 2021. We have been carefully monitoring the subsequent applications in relation to ancillary matters.

Calderstone, Biggar Road, Midlothian – This is a long running matter involving an application for a large hotel and some housing which, despite objections, was granted in 2015 since when there have been a number of ancillary applications.

Former Lothianburn Golf Course - Although a Pre Application Notice was submitted and approved in 2015 for a significant development of mountain bike trails and for other activities, no formal planning application has been submitted yet.

Edinburgh City Plan 2030 – We have responded to the consultation to lend our strong support to the proposed environmental policy under which development furthering the aims of the Pentland Hills Regional Park will be supported policy provided it has no unacceptable impact on the landscape character and special qualities of the Park, including views to and from the Park.

Although the relevant authorities all have searchable planning portals, it is not always easy to identify potentially significant applications and suggestions from members as to cases with which we might appropriately become involved are always welcome.



Facebook *Bob Douglas*

In 2021 the world, and FotP activities, almost got back to normal, and this was reflected in the regular flow of postings onto the FotP Facebook Page.

Shots from workdays are always popular, especially those showing volunteers operating in muddy conditions. We are getting better at recording the “Before” as well as the “After” scenes to show the impact of our efforts. Workday postings are usually shared on the “Pentland Hills Users” Facebook Page to inform a much wider audience of the activities we undertake.

Postings from litter-picking days are usually posted onto the “Pentland Hills Litter Watch” page (by Andrew Gallacher) and shared onto the FotP page.

Every month I publish a series of “seasonal views”. I aim to showcase the variety of scenery but this year I included a lot more shots of the often overlooked or seldom spotted wildlife that can be found across the hills.

There are now well over 1500 Followers of the FotP Page on Facebook. This does not mean that 1500 folk see every post – Facebook doesn’t work that way – but it is an indication of growing visibility.

My thanks to everyone who sent in photos of workdays (especially Donald Sandeman).

Search “Friends of the Pentlands” on Facebook or Google, or go to <https://www.facebook.com/Friendsofthepentlands1>

FotP Website

The FotP Website was originally created about seven years ago, and whilst regular updates have been applied since then, it’s probably fair to say that the overall structure and much of the content has not evolved to reflect current expectations.

So we are looking to gradually overhaul the website during 2022 to make it easier to find useful, interesting and up-to-date information.

The website address is <https://pentlandfriends.org.uk/>

Friends of the Pentlands people

Office Bearers

Chair	Hamish Clark
Vice-Chair	Andrew Marsden
Treasurer	Iain MacLeod
Secretary and Acting	
Membership Secretary	Dennis Smith

Other Board members

Judy Cantley
Nicola Fryer (from February 2021)
Olga Macfadyen
Iain Morrice
Douglas Tullis (from September 2021)

Team leaders

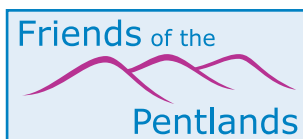
Alyson Patrick	Tea and Cakes
Linda Stirling	Tea and Cakes
Judy Cantley	Litter-picking + walks & talks
Iain Morrice	Wheelchair Walks
Douglas Tullis	Planning Officer
Iain MacLeod	Annual Review editor
Ian Combe	Conservation and Training
Hamish Clark	Workdays & Corporate Liaison
Donald Sandeman	Work parties
John Surtees	Path inspections
Mike Andrew	Arboretum coordinator
Angus Ogilvy	Liaison with HMP workshop
Peter Moore	Publications editor
Bob Douglas	Facebook editor
Andrew Marsden	Pentland Way Coordinator





Credits:

Annual Review Editor: Iain MacLeod
 Photo Editor: Dennis Smith
 Photo Credits: Bob Douglas,
 Andrew Gallacher, Donald Sandeman.



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