

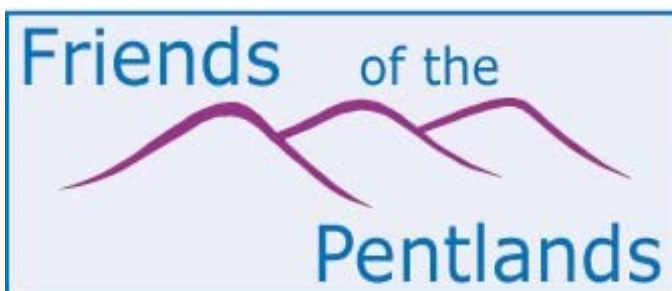
Pentland Post

October 2022



Get a grip! A work Party installs a bog bridge on the Thieves Road

Photo Donald Sandeman



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

Your October 2022 Pentland Post brings you a range of features and news which I hope you find interesting and informative. Many thanks to all contributors.

Our Chairperson and lead of the Pentlands Way Consolidation Group, Andrew Marsden puts the finishing touches to the project. Walking the Pentland Way is a definite target for the editor in the months ahead.

Bob Douglas, who might be regarded as our resident photographer, also takes an interest in the wildlife in the Pentlands, and he provides a knowledgeable account of the range of butterfly species to be found in the hills, and their preferred habitats. This is well illustrated by his own photographs.

Following the introduction to the “Nomads” in the last edition, another description of a trek in the Pentlands from the 1930s, this time by current member Ann Gilmour’s mother, provides a female experience of walking in the hills in those times.

The selection of photos samples the tasks carried out by the Friends on the hills, and fine views, while our resident poet Angus Ogilvy paints a verbal picture of the Pentlands. We also highlight how the Pentlands has been featured in the media in recent months.

I hope you enjoy the contents, and for those who are unable to access the hills physically, may this conjure up images and bring the Pentlands alive for you.

WHERE AM I ? Where was the photo below taken? Find out on page 8



In early summer of 2021 when Covid restrictions were still in place I set myself the challenge of getting at least one decent picture of all the butterfly species found in the Pentlands. According to the species list maintained by the Regional Park, 17 species had been recorded, and an 18th had appeared within the previous couple of years, but not yet added. I already had shots of nearly half of the species, mostly the common ones, so it would be a challenge to not only find the various habitats on a sunny day at the right time of year, but actually get close enough to get a decent shot.

It has taken over a year, but I finally completed this challenge in June of this year when I found the 21st species present, three more than the original target. So why were there more than expected? Climate change has resulted in a number of species gradually extending their range northwards, with three having moved up the east coast into the Lothians and recently into some of the more benign parts of the hills (**Speckled Wood**, **Small Skipper** and **Wall**). But whilst species that favour warmer, drier conditions are extending northwards, those that need damp habitats will suffer. In the case of the 21st species found, **Northern Brown Argus**, it was probably always here, but as a tiny butterfly found in a unique habitat, in a relatively small area, it has quite literally remained under the radar. Rather than feature all 21 species I'll ignore the ones commonly found in gardens and the ones which fill the grasslands in midsummer and concentrate on those which are a bit more colourful, scarcer, tricky to spot, and generally more rewarding.



Green Hairstreak

The **Green Hairstreak** features on the Friends of the Pentlands badge. It is one of the earliest to emerge, appearing from mid-April to mid-May. There are a number of known colonies in the Pentlands in clumps of gorse on/opposite Torduff Hill and on Castlelaw. There have been reported sightings elsewhere in the Pentlands.

The **Orange Tip** appears early May to Mid-June and is fairly common. It is only the male which has the orange colouring. The female has a black tip, but it can be recognised from other "whites" by the distinctively mottled rear underwing. Large numbers of Orange Tips (alongside Green Veined Whites) can be found



Male and female Orange Tip

beside the single track road from Harperrig to Colzium, and up the forestry track to West Cairn Hill where plentiful supplies of its main food source, Cuckoo Flower, grow in the damp margins.



Wall Butterfly

The **Wall** is one of the recent arrivals, having only been recorded in 2021 with a single individual sighted on the path from Boghall to Caerketton. It is now well established in the Lothians and further

sightings on rough, dry sunny slopes should be expected. It appears in late spring, with a second brood appearing in late summer. As it extends northwards it has become virtually extinct in some traditional haunts in central England.

The flash of colour from the **Common Blue** is a heart-warming sight in mid-summer. It is only the male which is all-blue, the female has a much browner appearance. They are fairly



Common Blue

widespread, but seldom seen in large numbers. The most reliable spot I've found is the section of footpath alongside the North Esk leading upstream from Patie's Mill in Carlops. This is a particularly rich habitat containing a number of species, including the **Northern Brown Argus**. Finding a colony of the Northern Brown Argus (NBA) in the Pentlands was a real coup as this is one of Butterfly Conservation's priority species in Scotland. It is slightly



Northern Brown Argus



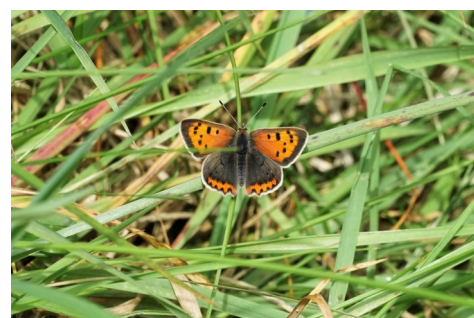
Small Skipper

smaller than the Green Hairstreak, and spends a lot of time resting in the undergrowth. I had to rely on watching other butterflies "flushing out" NBA's in order to spot them – and they are probably the hardest species to follow when flying!

Another tiny species which has recently arrived is the **Small Skipper**. It has moved up the east coast and is now widespread around grassy areas of the hills in July. It seems to have extended its range

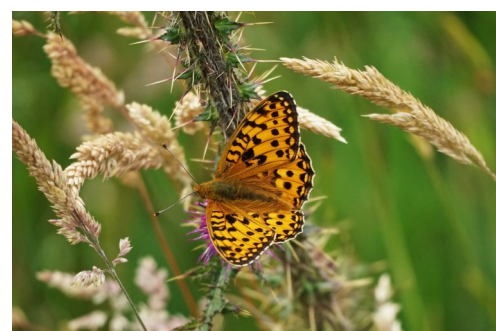
into West Lothian and may now have crossed the Forth into Fife.

The last of the tiny gems I'll mention is the **Small Copper**. It has two or occasionally three broods in the year, appearing late spring and late summer / early autumn. Like the Common Blue they are widespread, but in small



Small Copper

numbers. The most reliable spot I've found for them is above Boghall Farm just after crossing the stile in the direction of Hillend.

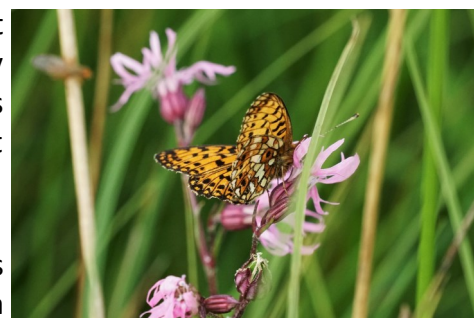


Dark Green Fritillary

From the small butterflies to one of the largest found in the hills, the **Dark Green Fritillary** is a majestic sight as it glides almost effortlessly

at high speed. By the time you think you've seen one passing it is probably out of sight. It is found on a number of sunny hillsides, but again the best area is the N Esk valley.

The **Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary** has similar markings, but is smaller and "flutters" rather than "zooms" through the air. It is a native of damper, milder areas and is relatively scarce in the Pentlands. I have seen (and photographed) them at Wester Bavelaw, Harperrig and Carlops.



Small Pearl Bordered Fritillary

There are a handful of other species not yet recorded in the Pentlands that are found quite close by in the Lothians and Borders, with others gradually moving northwards. One or two might even have arrived in a hidden part the Pentlands where the right habitat exists. I hope to find a 22nd species (and 23rd ...) in the next couple of years.

Friends of the Pentlands will be looking to enhance the habitats which support butterflies by working with PHRP and landowners with a programme of sustainable habitat creation or restoration. This will involve planting wildflowers that support the caterpillars and adults of our more interesting species. It would be great to see more of the smaller colourful residents of the Pentlands thriving.

PATH INSPECTIONS - Stiles, Gates, Perches, Bridges and more.....

With autumn approaching we are now in the season for the annual inspection of all the “assets” looked after by the Friends of the Pentlands along 20 paths in the hills. As the figures below indicate this is a significant undertaking, requiring detailed organisation and rigorous record keeping, all meticulously managed by John Surtees.

FRIENDS OF THE PENTLANDS ASSETS

Line of Sight and Way Marking posts:	120
Sleeper Bridges:	33
Boardwalks:	5
Self Closing Gates and Kissing Gates:	12
Stiles:	18
Perches and Benches:	19
Interpretation Panels:	14
Foot Bridges:	4

Each year John supplies the (usually) pairs of volunteer path inspectors with comprehensive lists of the assets on all the individual paths, with their precise locations. Inspectors note the condition of the assets and when the information is returned to John, he incorporates this into the register. This in turn helps with decisions about priority tasks for the Work Parties in the coming months.

We also look after hundreds of FOP signs (i.e. way marking roundels) as well as 57 signs mounted on metal

backing plates specifically created for the Pentland Way, along with 2 large vintage cast iron signs.

There is still more to look after:

Six arboreta within the Pentland Hills, three dry stone walling structures, including two stell seats, built working with the Dry Stone Walling Association and dozens of



Line of Sight Post Crosswood Path

D Sandeman

culverts, ditches and path shorings.

Thanks to John, the Friends has detailed information on the health of all these structures, and resources can be directed to where they are needed most.



Stone stell “Donald’s Seat”

Photo by Ian Combe

NOMADS LOGBOOK 6th July 1935

About 6.00 pm I boarded an SMT bus at Tollcross and was speedily conveyed to Lothianburn. Here I alighted and soon I was scaling the heights of Caerketton. I eventually reached the top after a succession of stops. I just had to gaze backward as nature had me under her hypnotic power. I seemed to see day and night as I might see two streets in the city at any time. Haddington District looked strangely black while the Kingdom of Fife was bathed in sunshine, as were our beloved Pentlands. It was a perfect evening for hill climbing as the visibility was exceptionally fine. I could see the Grampians looming through the clouds in the north while in the north west I could plainly see Ben Lomond and Ben Venue towering their heads above the other hills around them. In the Forth I could see – or perhaps it was merely imagination – that veteran the Mauritania, lying in state. I left Caerketton, bagged Allermuir and reached the top of the Howden Glen. Here I

took the path over to Glencorse Reservoir. I was alone in my glory amidst the splendour of the hills, so naturally I fell into a reminiscent mood. My thoughts returned to the days when I first felt the call of the hills, and how I used to gaze with child-like awe at the West Kip, imagining its pinnacle was unscalable and how I would some day conquer it, but as one grows older,



Glencorse Reservoir circa 1934

one grows wiser, so I smiled at my childhood dreams and returned in thought to the ever changing present. Where were my mountaineering friends now, I asked of myself. How many mountains had they climbed on the strength of porridge oats? They were probably amongst Scotia's grandest scenery, but I did not envy them, for I too have the Scot's heritage, a love of nature and I was in nature's palace. On reaching Barr's Hut, I went by Maiden's Cleuch to Malleny, over the fields to Thriepmuir and then on to Marchbank where I hoped fortune would favour me in the way of a night's rest. Mr Stenhouse, a gamekeeper, and his wife who live there, are the very essence of kindness and they made me very welcome. After a lecture on the art of swearing from the gamekeeper

himself, who speaks the lingo fluently, I was allowed to retire about midnight to my bedroom. Well, as Klinker remarked many moons ago, “nice chappies these gamekeepers”, I repeat it with much more sincerity than Klinker ever would have used.

At about 8.30 am I was surprised to hear a voice calling to me, “It’s half past eight. How do you like your eggs, hard or soft?” Why, home was never like that, so I obediently rose and dressed. Mr & Mrs Stenhouse were already seated at table when I entered the living room.. I scoffed off my two eggs and a whole half-loaf, then Mr Stenhouse suggested I should accompany him on an errand to his boss, the head keeper at



Tramess Royal, Klinker (The future Betty and Jack Prentice) and Bergan (Bill Anderson)

Bavelaw. I was taken by a strictly private road and being a privileged person I was allowed to see the dogs kept for shooting purposes. They were splendid looking spaniels. On the way back we spoke to a young herd and when they had finished talking about sheep in professional terms, we returned to Marchbank. Soon Excelsior and her friend Peggy Watson appeared. We left raincoats and packs with Mrs Stenhouse as the weather was perfect only it was too hot to carry anything, even food. We reached

Listonshiels and started across the Right of Way to the Bore Stane, but we did not go very far before the intense heat from a brilliant sun forced us to find a quiet burn where we sat by the side in a state of semi-undress, paddling our feet. When the heat was not so intense, at a much later hour of course, we made ourselves presentable and continued by the Bore Stane to the North Esk Reservoir, then along Cock Rig, over Kitchen Moss, and again we were standing on Mrs Stenhouse doorstep. She suggested our staying for tea, and how she does believe in feeding hikers. We inspected their garden, thanked them for their generous hospitality and left for Currie going by Threepmuir.

As recorded by “Tramess Royal”

Thanks to Ann Gilmour and Wilma Anderson for sharing the Nomad Logbooks

Do you recognise the “Marchbank” referred to in this account? Comments to the editor welcomed.

The work of the Pentland Way Consolidation Group is now complete. The Pentland Way Guide was launched on 17th June when the book (RRP £10 plus P&P) went on public sale. It is slowly being placed on sale in a number of book, outdoor and gift shops but readers can obtain copies from sales@pentlandfriends.org.uk Initial response to The Guide has been very encouraging.

We have now placed seven interpretative panels at a number of points along The Way. As well as displaying features of interest including history, geology and wildlife relevant to the local area, they contain QR codes which take the reader direct to the Pentland Way webpage on the Friends of the Pentlands website where ever-



changing information such as hospitality details and transport timetables can be kept up to date.

A Pentland Way Facebook page has recently been created. It is not possible at this stage to gauge the popularity of The Way but as more people use the FB page and drop comments on our website we will get a better idea of its success and what work and developments will be required to keep it current and of interest.

Potted Pentlands: The park contains:

- 146 species of lichens
- 109 species of fungus
- 142 species of moss
- 37 species of liverwort

Where am I? from Page 2

The photo of the poorly-looking rowan tree was taken on the Crosswood to Sergeant Law path. It does well to survive on that particularly windswept and exposed landscape.

November Morning On Capelaw Hill

All night
this hill has been
sprinkled with fairy dust;
every desire is crystallised
on grass.

Out of
the blue, under
a slice of slivered moon
in bright low sun everything is
sharpened



on the
edge of shadow;
the old horizons are
a skip, an instant's flight; there is
beyond

I stare
in disbelief
to distant islands of
memory crisp as yesterday
and now.

For the
only fog is
the brief light-trick of my
breathing silvered by a wand there
and there

and that
rumpled down quilt
in the valley below
where people still curl underneath
for warmth.

Some days
it seems as though
we might see forever;
even great mountains are flecks on
the sky.



2023 CALENDAR

The 2023
Friends of the
Pentlands

calendar is now on sale. Members can obtain their copy directly from Averil Sutherland (tel 07714 208402) for £6, or 3 for £15. Buying directly from Averil ensures all the revenue comes to the Friends. Thanks to everyone who sent in photos. We need more months in the year!

Calendar 2023
At Work and At Play in the Pentland Hills



Bob Daugles

Walking through the snow towards the Kips

2024 CALENDAR

We are already looking ahead to 2024. The theme of this calendar will be **“LIFE IN THE PENTLANDS”**, and as ever we are asking members to submit your photos. Please send pictures in landscape format to peter.moore@pentlandfriends.org.uk by the end of July 2023.



A small work party mends a stile below Allermuir on a stunning August day

Pentlands in the Media

The BBC online news headline “Fence will protect walkers from bull on cow attack path in Pentland Hills” was spotted by our secretary Dennis Smith. The dangers posed to walkers (and one presumes runners, cyclists, and stray paragliders) from the bovine population has once again hit the headlines. Fears for safety were expressed by some hill users.

Scotland's Rural College, which farms the land involved, was reported as saying it took safety at its farm operations very seriously. Steps were taken in 2020 to keep cattle entirely separate from the area's main right of way, to safeguard public access.

"They further advised that the construction of a short, fenced corridor. This will secure easy access to the rights of way all year round."

A Scottish government spokesman was quoted cautioning that if there was a bull in a field, the public was expected to go into a neighbouring field or on to adjacent land.

Dennis was pleased that the FOP has managed to “steer” clear of this controversy.

“Edinburgh Live” reported citizens of the capital city were “left astonished” after spotting dozens of ‘UFO’ style lights on the Pentland Hills earlier this year. The lights, visible from Granton, were the result of an event hosted by the Carnethy Hill Running Club.

The display was made by 300 participants lining up along the ridge of Allermuir Hill and lighting up torches. The light show apparently left many in Edinburgh bewildered as the lights appeared extra-terrestrial from a distance.

We are all enlightened now.....

Back to the BBC, and Radio Scotland’s “Out of Doors” broadcast on 20th August featured Pentland’s farmer Bob Barr talking about the impact of visitors to the hills. Figures quoted in the programme suggested that 200-300 visitors access his farm every day, whilst a neighbour sees as many as 3,000 visitors per day.

This programme is available via the “Scotland Outdoors” podcast of 20th August on BBC Sounds, with the interview starting just over 10 minutes in.

Have you any stories or pictures of the Pentlands which you would like to share with readers? Contact the editor at :

peter.moore@pentlandfriends.org.uk

News from the Board September 2022

The main theme of this report carries on from the last issue: as the worst ravages of the Covid pandemic recede into history, new life is starting to open up. Some old activities have resumed; new ventures are appearing on the horizon.

Since the AGM in June we have been delighted to welcome two new trustees to the Board. Bill Aitken has agreed to take on the vacant role of Membership Secretary and Bob Cook has offered to help expand our involvement in education and outreach. In particular, he has registered FoP with the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme administered through Volunteer Scotland.

As windows reopen we have been represented, often through our Chair Andrew Marsden, at public events like Art in the Park at Colinton, Bobcat Alpacas open day and the Great Big Green Day at Currie, with more to come. We are also receiving more requests from youth groups who want to get actively involved in conservation activities. John Hutton has agreed to lead a programme of informal walks for members and their guests.

June saw the successful launch of Andrew Marsden's revised and enlarged guide to the Pentland Way, attended by the Lord Provost of Edinburgh along with numerous councillors and other high heid yins. The Way has been enhanced by the installation of seven new interpretation panels, strung out between Dunsyre and Swanston.

On the ground the most important recent development has been Bob Douglas's initiative to encourage butterflies and other pollinators by sowing and protecting suitable food plants across a range of different habitats.

In terms of public engagement, the Friends objected to the planned withdrawal of buses on the 101/102 route running along the A702 to Biggar and beyond. The service has been reprieved until March 2023 but the threat may yet reappear. (*See the Pentland Post of October 2016 for a previous reprieve campaign! Ed*) We also commented adversely on revised plans for a wind farm at Cloich forest, and were pleased to note Scottish Borders Council's rejection of the application for a quarry at Slipperfield.

Report supplied by Dennis Smith, Secretary

