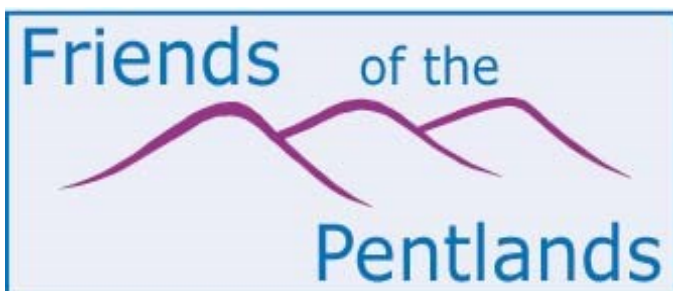


Pentland Post

October 2023



On their knees: In prayer or fatigue? Friends at work at Boghall



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EDITORIAL Peter Moore

Welcome to the autumn edition of the Pentland Post. It does not seem all that long since the spring edition was winging its way to Friends' in-boxes or letter boxes, but over that period there have been many hours of Friends' activities, litter-picking, inspecting and repairing paths and bridges, along with gardening and managing our arboreta. There also will have been many days spent in more leisurely fashion in the Pentlands, appreciating the experiences of being in the Pentlands, as well as the efforts of those volunteers.

This edition, by accident rather than design, reflects somewhat on the process of change in the Pentlands, over a rather longer timespan than a few months. There is an account of adaptations made at Patieshill Farm partly in response to economic pressures but also as a desire to enhance the land for wildlife. An article from academic sources considers the economic issues around "rewilding" and planting of native trees. Also included is a memory of Harlaw House before it became a Visitor Centre, which now faces an uncertain future.

Another change will be the editorship of the Pentland Post, as John Surtees takes on the role from October. John can be contacted at john.surtees@pentlandfriends.org.uk.

To all who have supported the retiring editor with articles, stories, poems and photographs, suggestions and proof-reading, "Thank you ."

Bridge repairs at Bonaly



Bike rack installation at Nine Mile Burn



Photographs: Donald Sandeman



WHERE AM I?

A small coniferous tree can be seen poking up on the skyline from the path where the picture is taken.

Can you identify the location?

Answer on Page 12.

CALENDAR NEWS

The Friends of the Pentlands calendar for 2024, under the theme “*Life in the Pentlands*” is now available for purchase. Friends can buy direct from Averil Sutherland (07714 208402) at a cost of £6, or three for £15, cash or cheque to Friends of the Pentlands. Buying direct means all proceeds go to Friends of the Pentlands.

Calendar 2024

Life in The Pentlands

Friends of the
Pentlands



Bob Douglas

Cows grazing above Glencorse

A WEE HISTORY OF HARLAW HOUSE VISITOR CENTRE

Wilma Shaw

Both our grandfather and great grandfather were waterboard men living in the house known to many now as Harlaw House Visitor Centre. Originally a single storey home, a second storey was added so our grandfather Jim Young, recently widowed, could move in with his daughter. This would allow her grandmother and aunts help care for her whilst he, a blacksmith, was employed by the Edinburgh Waterboard to assist his father in maintaining the reservoirs and their mechanical structures.



As a child I recall the walk from the SMT bus stop in Balerno up the road, through the wood, hearing the sighing of the trees, being fearful of the steep drop down to the rushing water on our way to visit my mother's family. As we grew older we spent time in the large and well tended

vegetable and fruit garden to the side of the cottage or sitting in Auntie Kate's red tramcar shop enjoying Smith's potato crisps, Tunnock's snowballs or teacakes and lemonade. She sold soft drinks, chocolate, crisps, etc to passing hikers. Cigarettes and matches were kept locked in the front room to the right of the house door.

There were often lambs in the back garden and pigs in the small sty that backed onto the garage/ workshop in the south corner of the garden. When Great Grandpa died, his son, Grandpa, became head waterman until he retired to Loanhead.

It was as a member of the Nomads , a band of hikers from the city, that our father Bill Anderson met and later married Hetty Young, our mother. Their love of the Pentlands, the many friendships they made, their understanding of and pleasure in being on or near these hills was surely captured in the psalm, " I to the hills will lift mine eyes..." sung at their funerals.

THE HIDDEN ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC COSTS OF REWILDING

Countryside rewilding has become a passionate priority for many conservationists and is increasingly influencing Britain's tree planting and afforestation programmes. While tree planting supporting biodiversity and nature protection is important, the direct and indirect environmental and economic costs of rewilding have been overlooked.

Advocates of rewilding favour the planting of native, predominantly broadleaved tree species with the expectation of little, if any, timber production. They argue that the long-term benefits to society of forests dominated by native trees (e.g., birch, hazel, oak, alder) outweigh the future benefits of productive species (e.g., spruce, firs). However, discussions within the media on expanding environmental forests never mention where the more than 50 million tonnes of wood products that we use each year in Britain come from. With only 13% of land occupied by trees, Britain has the second smallest area of forest in Europe and is the world's second biggest importer of wood products. Ironically, the growing demand for timber is influenced by environmental pressures to replace polluting or non-sustainable materials with 'environmentally sustainable' wood products, and arguments around carbon and 'embedded energy' are increasingly used to support the greater use of wood in construction.

With worldwide demand for timber increasing at around 4% per annum, global wood supply/demand balances are anticipated to change from surplus to deficit by the middle of this century. That will inevitably precipitate an expansion of logging in natural/semi-natural forests. In essence, we are moving towards a scenario where we increasingly use our land for conservation tree planting while importing the huge quantities of wood products that we need from elsewhere in the world, including from already threatened natural and semi-natural forests. The 'carbon footprint' of importing timber products over great distances is significant in terms of climate change.

Growing more of our own wood is vital to reduce imports and consequential pressures from logging (often illegal) of the world's remaining natural forests, improve domestic balance of payments, and to create a sustainable resource that generates wealth and employment, particularly in rural areas.

Despite having had a policy for more than 100 years to decrease the country's dependence on imported wood by increasing the forest area, in practice the area has only increased by about 8% in that time. For the last 40 years much of that increase has been non-commercially-productive native woodland.

The extensive areas of treeless hill land in Scotland offer the greatest potential for increasing Britain's meagre productive forest resource. Scotland's Forestry Strategy provides for increasing Scotland's forest area by 200,000 hectares by 2032. However, in 2022, 65% (4100 hectares) of the 6300 hectares of bare land planted in Scotland, were planted with native broadleaved tree species. Based on these figures, during the next 9 years, 130,000 hectares will be planted with native tree species that will produce little if any usable timber. And it doesn't stop there. Scotland's long-established productive

coniferous forests, frequently derided by conservationists, are impacted by the rewilding fashion. Of the 8300 hectares of productive conifers that were felled in 2022, one fifth of the area was replanted with predominantly unproductive native broadleaved tree species, further reducing our ability to produce the timber that we need in the future.

Research has shown that productive conifer forests are three times more efficient at fixing carbon than native conservation planting. Productive 'plantation' forests are also a highly efficient use of land. They only cover 3% of the total global forest area yet produce one third of global industrial timber. It is also interesting to reflect on the illogicality of conservationists in criticising non-native tree species growing in British forests that cover 13% of the land area when almost the entire agricultural sector covering around 70% of the land area is based on farming non-native plants and animals.

Rewilding may attract a lot of attention by the media, but in the context of the overall national interest, it is not the answer. On average, every hectare of land that could support productive conifers but are instead planted with native broadleaved species, represents a future loss to the economy of some 440 tonnes (20 lorry-loads) of usable wood. Every tonne of wood that is imported into Britain represents a drain on our economy, a risk to biodiversity somewhere else in the world, and adds more carbon to the atmosphere.

Rewilding should undoubtedly have a place in the management and development of the countryside, but not to the extent that it is indirectly damaging the natural environment elsewhere in the world. It is important to recognise that well managed productive forests are both sustainable and biodiverse.

Dr Andrew Cameron, Senior Lecture in Forest Ecology and Management, Institute of Biological and Environmental Sciences, University of Aberdeen.
Martyn Baguley, Forest Economist (Rtd)

June 2023

3 types of Crustaceans

14 Terrestrial Mammals

7 Beetles

1 Reptile

4 Amphibians

135 Birds

LIFE IN THE PENTLANDS

How many of the 14 terrestrial mammals, and the 4 amphibians to be found in the Pentlands can you name? (See list on Page 12.)

The 1 reptile is a lizard. Interestingly no adders.

What is it like farming on the Pentland Hills? It would not be surprising if you have asked yourself this question while scrambling up steep paths in wind and rain, or while contemplating life sitting on a sunny summer's day overlooking a peaceful view down below.

There are likely to be as many different experiences of farming on the hills as there are farms and farmers in the Pentlands, but here Janet and George Burke at Patieshill Farm shared a few of theirs.

Their story began in August 1968 when Janet's father purchased Patieshill after retiring from a successful portering business in Leith. He had a particular interest in heavy horses and their harness and decorations, showing and judging at many agricultural shows, and he also had a few highland ponies.



The predominant focus of the business was a flock of around 240 Blackface sheep, well suited to the hill environment, being a hardy breed. Their longer rougher wool was in demand for carpets. There used to be a time when income from wool sales would pay for a shepherd, but fluctuating wool prices have upset this calculation. There have been times when the cost of clipping a sheep was more than the income from the wool, however some recent recovery in prices has been noted.

Over the 320 acres of hill, the assistance of Collie sheepdogs has been invaluable. George reckons a single dog would do the work of 2 people, and he could shout instructions up the hill from lower down, trusting that their dog had the instinctive skill to round up the flock and bring them down.

Having been sceptical initially about the benefits of a four-wheeled motor bike, he was eventually persuaded by his son to get one, and now appreciates the mobility it offers.

George and Janet also kept a few beef cows, along with a milking cow which Janet used to milk by hand initially, before investing in a milking machine. Their milk was for home consumption. George, who has a mechanical and electrical engineering background, along with business management training, initially with the NCB (National Coal Board for

those of less mature years), acknowledges that farming presented new challenges, and while he kept up his employment with a large agricultural supplies company, he brought his technical and management expertise to bear.

Looking after the land and sustaining it for future generations was always a priority, and shelter-breaks of conifer trees were planted to protect fields from prevailing winds. Their two children Graham and Jane grew up well-versed in farming ways, and Graham now runs his own agricultural business, and Jane works for a local seed company. George and Janet recall how the local farming community came together to help each other, with advice and practical assistance.



By 1992, Janet and George were questioning the viability of maintaining cows on the farm, recognising that a significant investment in facilities would be required. After some debate, they decided diversification was likely to be a better option, so the cow byre and shed were converted into bedrooms and a kitchen, and a B&B business was established. No sooner had George erected a sign on the roadside than the first guest was seeking accommodation. Benefitting from majestic views, the nearby A702 main road, proximity to Edinburgh and the proprietors' hospitality the investment proved to be a success with many returning guests and continuing contacts with satisfied customers around the globe.

George advised that as their water was sourced from a spring, it was required to be tested to ensure it was of sufficient quality for their visitors, otherwise they would require to connect to the mains supply. They were naturally delighted when the results came back indicating that all was well, with the testing agency representative commenting that he would rather drink their water, with its good mineral content from 200 feet down, than tap water. Calculations suggest that the source can provide 3,000 gallons a day. 17 springs have been counted on the farm which George believes has ensured that the hillside does not go totally brown even in the driest summer.

Following a devastating storm in 1998, George and Janet set aside an area of land to attract a greater range of wildlife, and recently the Friends of the Pentlands have begun supporting them with the creation of wild flower meadows aimed at providing species of butterflies with a habitat suited to their needs. More of this in a future edition of the Pentland Post.

POET'S CORNER with Angus Ogilvie

Drystane

every stone has its place
in the dyke

each supported
and supporting

to accommodate
its size and shape

moss and lichen grow
according to its light

winds disperse through gaps
where they must pass

and the dyke retains the weight
of all that has been left

©Angus D.H. Ogilvy

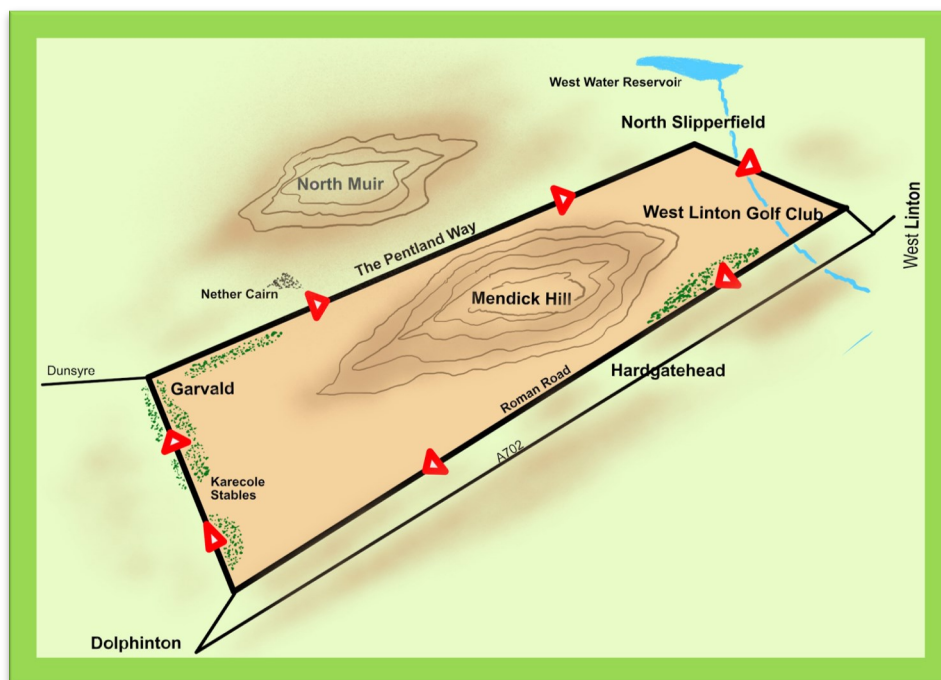


Photographs of Friends volunteers building a drystone dyke at Garvald

WALK OF THE SEASON

WEST LINTON TO GARVALD and return

JOHN SURTEES



A delightful circular walk through varying landscapes using the Roman Road and the Pentland Way. Enjoy it and remember to follow the Countryside Code.

13.5km (8.6m) in total if parking in the small layby beside West Linton Golf Club (NT 141 521). Ascent/Descent 193m (635 feet). If parking in or using public transport to/from West Linton village 15.1km (9.5m) in total. Ascent/Descent 230m (790 feet)*.



Maps: Ordnance Survey Landscape 72
Ordnance Survey Explorer 344
From the small layby near West Linton Golf Club head directly south and then shortly as indicated by a Scotways sign take the left hand track towards Dolphinton. After .8km (.5 m) cross the distinctive old stone bridge (erected 1620 and restored in 1899).

There then follows a series of farm gates and also a turn off to gain Mendick Hill but for the most part it follows the course of the Roman Road straight ahead. After passing through a number of fields, which are often stocked with

animal livestock, Ingraston farm is approached to the left, then an out of bounds quarry. Continuing on, the route passes Sandy Nick cottage before coming to a minor tarmac road. Dolphinton lies to the south but at this minor road turn right and follow the road for about .4 km (2.5m) to reach Karecole Stables.

Immediately before the main entrance you'll see signs for the Pentland Way on the left - you are now on a spur of the Way which joins the main route from Dunsyre to Swanston at Garvald.



The track from the stables to Garvald cuts through some very pleasant meadow land to reach a tarmac road. Here, cross directly over and, following the Pentland Way signs, continue through ornamental gates and along a drive arched by majestic mature broadleaf trees to reach the community of Garvald West Linton.

The Pentland Way spur continues to be well signed around the large house, workshops and an old mill to shortly reach Garvald Home Farm 'corner'. The Friends in 2023 assisted the Dry Stone Walling Association build a new wall here of some 40 metres or so. At this corner turn right, as directed by the sign to West Linton, and carry straight on before passing through stone pillars to reach Ferniehaugh. Here on the right note the very attractive private pond. Leaving Ferniehaugh the route accesses open moorland after leaving a long stand of conifer trees on the right.

A feature of the moor here are the large cairns situated just off the Way to the left. The first and largest is the Nether Cairn. Continue directly on to cross a small ford before joining a tarmac road. Here bear right and follow the road past North Slipperfield towards West Linton Golf Club. Just before the layby a visit is recommended to the small arboretum tended to by the Friends of the Pentlands where you will find a number of perches to enjoy a well earned rest.



* From West Linton village head for the A702 and after turning left and crossing the road look for the minor road marked Baddinsgill to the right. Head directly uphill and after .7km (.4m) take a left turn and shortly afterwards West Linton Golf Club will be passed on the right.

MAMMALS found in the Pentlands: (From Page 5)

Eurasian Water Shrew, European Mole, Pipistrelle Bat, Red Fox, Otter, Eurasian Badger, Stoat, Weasel, American Mink, Roe Deer, European Water Vole, Brown Hare, Mountain Hare, Bank Vole.

What? No rabbits? Or hedgehogs?

AMPHIBIANS:

Palmate Newt, Smooth Newt, Common Toad, Common Frog

Source : Pentland Hills Regional Park: Species List.

Where am I? From Page 4

You are on the Kirkburn to Swanston Path looking east towards the north slope of Castlelaw Hill. Local sources advise that the tree is decorated with lights at Christmas time!



Drainage works on the Kirkburn Path: Photos Donald Sandeman