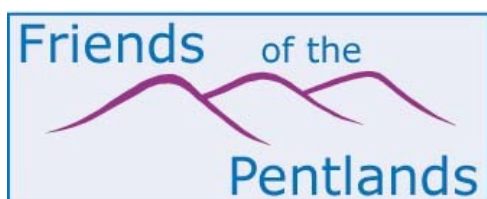


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PENTLAND POST

July 2012

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Secretary

I'm very pleased to have been able to work on this, my first edition of the Post, since taking over the Secretary's role at May's AGM.

It also gives me the opportunity to say a public thanks to my predecessor Bob Paterson.



Bob at work in the Harlaw garden

Under the terms of our Constitution Bob was required to step down from this role which he has occupied since 2003.

He is a founder member of the Friends and one of the 'gang of 13' who met then to create the Society. His contribution to the Friends success has been immense and the Friends have been fortunate indeed to have had such an outstanding Secretary.

Not only that Bob has been very active in many of our varied work days and, with the help of his wife Maggie, in the Friend's Tea & Cakes days which have raised a substantial sum for our conservation work. It took Chairman John Stirling at his persuasive best to encourage me to put my name forward to follow on from Bob!

At the AGM Bob was presented with a painting of himself in the Harlaw garden painted by Vice-Chairman Mike White as an appreciation of all his work as Secretary.

Bob will still be involved with the Friends. He and a dedicated team of green fingered helpers are working away twice a month looking after the wild life garden at Harlaw.

Access for All

Our Access for All event took place on Friday 11th and Saturday 12th May and attracted participants from a number of organisations.

The event allowed people with varying disabilities to gain access to the Pentland Hills. In addition to wheelchair users we had pupils and staff from Woodlands, Kaimes and Braidburn Schools, Colinton

Community Composting Tiphereth, Youth Vision and also persons passing by.

Pond dipping, which was organised by Ranger Paula Bell, was thoroughly enjoyed by a number of younger participants. Participants also enjoyed taking on the Harlaw reservoir circuit on both days before returning to the Visitor Centre where arrangements had been made for a lunch stop.



ready for the off

Scotmid very kindly provided the refreshments for both these days and the sandwiches went a bit further than anticipated. A group had to call off due to unforeseen circumstances and through Fiona Piggot of Currie Kirk we were able to deliver the unused sandwiches to Bethany trust so no wastage. We are indebted to Scotmid for their support of the event.

We hired transport for the days to transfer participants from various locations and we hired four mobility scooters. The City of Edinburgh Council made things easier this year with alterations to the bridge over the reservoir spillway making the path fully accessible.

Work days

Threipmuir Bird Hide. We found , after the Winter, that the path to the bird hide

required quite an amount of maintenance as can be seen below.

Following discussion with the Rangers it was decided that the answer would be to create some culverts to allow for better drainage and to raise the path. We were fortunate to receive a very kind donation of 6 tonnes of aggregate from the Tarmac Group based at Ravelrig Quarry.



before and after



The aggregate was transported to site from the car park by Donald Graham, our work day team leader, and band of volunteers. As can be seen from these photographs we are hoping that the path will remain much drier than last winter.

New path at Silverburn. Following discussions with Midlothian Rangers and Penicuik Estate agreement has been reached to create a new, short path, at Silverburn. This will help create better

access to the hills for walkers approaching from the Penicuik area.

Work on the path has now started and will continue for several months. There are a number of stiles required and various works to delineate a path. One of the features of the path is that it makes its way through some mature and majestic broad leaf trees at the edge of the Silverburn glen.

South West Pentlands Inspection Why would 14 members of the Friends be bussed from West Linton on a Friday in April, around the Southern part of the hills, to be dropped off at 4 locations before all walking back to West Linton? Well the answer is our South West Pentlands annual inspection.

Over the years we've installed or helped to install a number of items of 'country furniture' as they're known i.e. stiles, sleeper bridges, way marking posts and line of sight posts etc.



ready to tackle the inspection

Every year we carry out an inspection to make sure that these items are 'fit for purpose' and where maintenance work is found to be required then this is built into our work day programme.

In addition to the inspecting the walks are always enjoyed by all concerned.

Balerno Ramblers

In April a new initiative was started with fellow members the Balerno Ramblers.

The Ramblers know that paths in general and the more popular paths in specific require maintenance and sometimes quite a comprehensive programme of work particularly following difficult winter conditions.

We were therefore delighted when one of their members, Euan Scroggie, contacted us to ask if they could help with our path maintenance programme. We have agreed a monthly work day and work has been undertaken on the Boghall to Hillend track and also at Scald Law. We are hoping that this will become a regular part of our programme and will certainly help the schedule of works that we have planned.

Litter Picking

The hills attract a lot of visitors as we know and in particular the northern part of the hills and the Regional Park. Whilst the vast majority are friends of the hills there are still those who persist in leaving evidence behind of their visits. The problem is, by and large, confined to a number of 'hot spots' in particular and some of the gateway entrances to the hills on the A702 and A70 roads.

However help is at hand. Phil Rowsby is our litter picking team leader and with a regular and stalwart band of members have continued and enhanced the previous work of the Friends by collecting quite an amazing amount of litter since the start of the year.

Some 130 bags so far have been collected this year in addition to a wide assortment of other refuse! Regular collections take place on specific dates each month and there is no doubt that the hills are 'healthier' because of this work. It has

also helped to lighten the work load of the Pentland Hill Ranger Service too, so well done to Phil and his team!

Walks

Our spring walk on 11th March, from Flotterstone and around Castlelaw was very well attended with Arthur Mackenzie leading a party of 20 walkers. Like much of the weather so far this year it was cool and cloudy. Conditions were much improved however for our early summer walks on Sunday 20th May. More than 20 walkers met at Swanston golf Club to be fortified with coffee and a bacon roll before splitting up and setting off on two walks. The longer walk, led by John Surtees, headed off to Capelaw, and John Stirling lead the shorter walk towards Hillend with both walks returning to Swanston in warm, sunny weather.

We are delighted that Fiona Black has agreed to take on the role of the Friends Walks Organiser. Details of walks Fiona has arranged can be found in the Programme of Events (reviewed Jul 2012).

Pentland Arboretums

Work has started on creating what, is hoped, will be a number of Arboretum's in the Pentlands. The idea is that each will have specimens of all the trees that are indigenous to the hills. Some 22 different types of trees have been identified. With the kind permission of the land owner, Swanston Farms, the first site has been identified and preparatory ground clearance works have taken place. Planting is scheduled to take place in the autumn and will be complimented by an interpretation panel.

Discussions are underway with a number of parties regarding other suitable sites in the hills.

Planning Issues

The appeal by the developers of the Harrows Law wind farm has been rejected by the Recorder. We continue to maintain a watching brief on possible developments within and close to the Pentlands hills

Snippets

Restructuring of the Pentland Hills Ranger Service. The City of Edinburgh Council Countryside Ranger Service has joined with the Pentland Hills Ranger Service and the joint service has been renamed 'The Natural Heritage Service'. It will be based at the Hermitage of Braid and it is expected that there will be little noticeable change other than some 'new faces' in the Service. Several operational benefits are also expected to be seen.

The Pentland Way. We have aspirations to develop a Pentland Way and work is underway to identify and record the most appropriate long distance Pentlands footpath. Once this happens the next step is for land owners and other interested parties, such as local authorities, to be contacted about the proposal after which work will begin to way mark the chosen route which will be publicised too.

AGM and Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO)

Members will be aware from the letter which was distributed in February that it is proposed that the legal status of the Society be altered to that of a SCIO. There was unanimous agreement at the Society's AGM in May, which was attended by almost 60 members, for this to happen and it is expected that application will be made July/August.