Pentland Inspirations
Art and Photographic
Competition 2016
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Welcome to the latest edition of the Pentland Beacon. If you haven’t explored these (virtual) pages before, you’re in for a treat. The Beacon collates articles from outdoor professionals across the Pentland Hills area, letting you know what’s been happening in the hills, and about upcoming activities.

I’m new to my role, having initially taken over as Paula Newton’s maternity cover, and soon after accepting a permanent position in the Regional Park. My outdoors background comes from remote environs: growing up in the Scottish Borders by the Cheviot Hills, I’ve also spent many years living and working in the Knoydart peninsula. This job is proving to be an ideal chance to explore the oft-overlooked Pentland hills, which have unexpected pockets of remoteness throughout, despite their proximity to the city.

I’ve used this issue to bring together some of the people and organisations already encountered in the job. These include fellow new-start Andrew Law in the Natural Heritage (City) team, PHRP Natural Heritage Officer Martin Duncan (now full-time Access Officer), the valuable work of Edinburgh and Lothian Greenspace Trust, and the Friends of the Pentlands, who are a redoubtable bunch of hardy volunteers with unmatched energy and enthusiasm. Every article written in here has been penned by someone with a passion for our Regional Park. They also have an appreciation of the unique mix of landowners, recreational users and organisations which work together to keep the Park area a welcoming, working landscape.

Enjoy!

Tommy McManmon
Natural Heritage Officer, Pentland Hills Regional Park

Pentland Hills Regional Park staff

Steven Webley
Regional Park Manager

Jenny Hargreaves
Senior Natural Heritage Officer

Victor Partridge
Natural Heritage Officer: Harperrig to Threipmuir, Hillend, Swanston, Boghall

Tommy McManmon
Natural Heritage Officer: Harlaw, Bonaly, MOD land (until November 2017, then Carlops to Flotterstone)

Meryl Norris
Natural Heritage Officer: Carlops to Flotterstone (maternity cover for Paula Newton until November 2017)
The Pentland Hills Regional Park covers an area of 10,000 hectares with over 100km (62 miles) of paths. Approximately 500,000 people enjoy recreation in the park every year; walking, cycling, horse riding and fishing to name but a few of the recreational activities.

The staff that manage the Regional Park carry out a large number of projects in order to increase the visitor’s enjoyment of the Park. These include: path construction and maintenance; signage and waymarking; installation of access gates; habitat improvements for wildlife; and improvement of facilities at visitor centres and other popular sites. There are always more to do than resources allow. That is where the Donations Scheme can help.

The Donations Scheme is a simple way for people to put something back into the Regional Park. The scheme allows people to make a general donation for environmental improvements in the Park.

All funds raised are used only for new ‘added value’ projects on the ground and not for the day to day running of the Service.

Completed projects:
- Upgrading of steps leading into Bonaly Country Park from Torduff Reservoir (2012).
- 500 copies of the ‘Horse Riding in the Pentland Hills Regional Park’ leaflet (2010).

For more information and to donate visit the Regional Parks website: [www.pentlandhills.org](http://www.pentlandhills.org)

‘Approximately 500,000 people enjoy recreation in the park every year; walking, cycling, horse riding and fishing to name but a few of the recreational activities.’
Event:
Walking with Wilfred Owen

Writing workshops and guided walks
10 August and 21 October

In the Autumn/Winter 2015 edition of Pentland Beacon historian Neil McLennan shared his research, showing the impact of the Pentland Hills on First World War poet Wilfred Owen. Neil’s research shows that Owen referred to the hills and his time in Craiglockhart as “my Oxford.” Born in Currie, Neil walked amidst the hills regularly as a boy. In the last few years he has been chairman of the Wilfred Owen’s Edinburgh 1917-2017 Committee who have aimed to bring a series of events to the capital to raise awareness of the war poets’ time and inspiration they drew from Edinburgh.

As part of those events Neil will lead two walks in the Pentland Hills retracing the footsteps of Owen and the Craiglockhart War Hospital Field Club who walked there. Both walks will leave at 11am from Harlaw House Visitor Centre. The walks will take four to five hours to complete. You must be in good health and walk at your own risk. You should also come with appropriate shoes and clothing for any weather conditions. The walks are moderate-to-challenging, although will keep to established footways. There will be a chance to hear more about Owen’s time in Edinburgh, and to meet some First World War soldiers along the way! The walks will take place on 10 August and 21 October – exactly 100 years to the day on both dates that Owen walked from Threipmuir to Glencorse. Neil will be retracing his route exactly and sharing some of his stories along the way. The walks will both complete at the Harlaw House Visitor Centre.

If you would like to write your own response to walking in Owen’s footsteps, writer and facilitator Helen Boden will lead creative writing sessions to accompany and complement the walks. Warm-up exercises, suitable for all levels of experience, will prime you to walk as poets. Fiction and non-fiction are welcome. The workshops will give you the chance to engage all the senses, notice details, and think about words (including place-names, geological features, and wildlife), sounds, rhythms, time and space. After the walk there will be further time for writing, and reading and sharing the results over a cup of tea or coffee.

The walks/workshops package will cost £8 on the day, or £5 to just attend a walk or workshop separately. To book your place, email: PentlandHills@edinburgh.gov.uk

For information on the many other Owen events this year, check out the Facebook group: Wilfred Owen’s Edinburgh 1917-2017.
The Pentland Hills Regional Park runs biodiversity surveys throughout the year. These surveys are part of our responsibilities under the local biodiversity action plans. They also give us an understanding about the plants and animals which live here, and how we can manage the Regional Park to enhance these species. All surveys are free to attend and do not require any prior knowledge or experience. Booking is essential – see contact details below. Please wear warm, waterproof clothing and sturdy footwear.

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<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Survey Title</th>
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<td>Wildflower Meadow Survey</td>
<td>Bavelaw Marsh</td>
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To book, or for further details, contact us at Pentland Hills Regional Park HQ:

Telephone: 0131 529 2401
email: pentlandhills@edinburgh.gov.uk
web: www.pentlandhills.org
Plans are being drawn up for a week of volunteer public tree planting at Dreghorn and Castlelaw Ranges on the edge of the Pentlands this May. The Woodland Trust is marking the 100th anniversary of World War I by planting Centenary Woods in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales.

Dreghorn is the location for Scotland’s Centenary Wood. The site is steeped in military history and has been used as a training ground for over 100 years. During WWI many troops had their first experience of trenches on this mock battlefield. Scotland’s First World War Wood in the Pentland Hills is a living, growing thank-you to everyone who lived through the conflict, from those who paid the highest price and their families, to the hardworking men and women on the home front.

Woodland Trust Scotland is working with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) and lead partner Sainsbury’s to plant over 100 acres of land, connecting up existing woodland and providing new habitat for wildlife. Ten thousand trees and a wildflower meadow were planted in 2014, as well as an avenue of 50 wild service trees which we hope will provide an annual flash of red during autumn. The second phase of planting will take place in 2017, with 19,000 trees going into the ground.

The plan is that 5,000 of these will be planted by volunteers in the week of 2-6 May 2017. The second phase of planting will take place in 2017, with 19,000 trees going into the ground. The plan is that 5,000 of these will be planted by volunteers in the week of 2-6 May 2017. The week will include school planting days, staff days for some of the project’s corporate partners, and public planting opportunities. All are welcome to take part, whether you have a family connection to the conflict, or simply a love of the Pentlands.

Keep an eye on the events page at http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk for details, or email: scotland@woodlandtrust.org.uk for more information. This is a unique opportunity to remember those who contributed to the war effort, as well as do your bit to boost wildlife habitats and biodiversity in the Pentlands.

George Anderson
Woodland Trust
Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust (ELGT) is a local, independent greenspace charity for Edinburgh and the Lothians which has been involved with the Pentland Hills for many years. For the past 25 years, the Trust has worked to improve and promote nearby green areas with a range of organisations, from community groups to schools, businesses, local authorities and other public bodies. We carry out projects of all shapes and sizes, from developing brand-new parks and woodlands to establishing small community gardens. Central to all our work is inspiring people to get active, use their local outdoor spaces, and discover for themselves the many opportunities lying on their doorstep.

One of the successes has been the greater use of the Pentland Hills. However, with the increase in visitor numbers there has been some erosion issues on the paths. ELGT has recently been working on a Pentland Hills Paths project, involving an audit of the existing paths, funded by nearby local authorities and Scottish Natural Heritage. Thirty of the upland paths were surveyed, totalling 72km in length. The audit determined that there has been substantial path erosion on the high and ridge routes where use is currently concentrated. Path works are necessary to ensure the routes will be suitable for the influx of visitors for the sustainable future, with high level paths requiring handbuilt solutions. Initial costings for the upgrading (and associated training programmes) are in the region of over £2million, and a funding package is being developed with stakeholders and funding organisations.

If you would like to keep updated on our activities, or want to find out more about ELGT in general, please follow us on facebook or twitter (@greenspacetrust), or visit our website at http://www.elgt.org.uk

Richard Darke
Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust
During a three-week period in June and July 2014, a researcher from the University of Potsdam, Germany, kindly supported by students from the University of Edinburgh, carried out a visitor survey at car parks surrounding the Regional Park. The study aimed to gather up-to-date information about people using the Regional Park, assess ecosystems and look at future management options. A total of 563 responses were received, including those from a complementary online survey.

The study found that the Pentland Hills Regional Park gives visitors from Edinburgh, West Lothian, and Midlothian a highly valued recreational environment. The age groups of people using the parks hasn’t changed since the first survey in 1998. There are however, more females visiting the Park now than in 2006. People are also now using it for a wider range of activities than walking, including more active sports, such as mountain biking and running.

Activities 1998-2006-2014
Most visitors are happy with the way the area is managed and are only looking for small changes over the next 10 to 15 years.

We identified five groups:
• “nature enthusiasts” who support enhanced biodiversity and nature conservation
• “forest enthusiasts” favouring an increase in native forest in parts of the Pentland Hills
• “recreation seekers” wishing for an enhanced recreational infrastructure
• “multi-functionalists” for whom the generation of wind energy would be acceptable to some degree
• “traditionalists” who favour open landscapes with little other usage.

Overall future preference
The results of the survey are published in the report “Use, appreciation and preferences for future development in the Pentland Hills Regional Park – Results of the user survey in 2014” on the Pentland Hills Regional Park website.

Further information can be found at: Article in the Journal of Mountain Research and Development:
http://www.bioone.org/doi/full/10.1659/MRD-JOURNAL-D-16-00044.1

Pentland Hills case study on OPPLA:
http://oppla.eu/casestudy/17268

Tool to visualise and assess land use preferences:
http://www.landpref.org

Katja Schmidt
schmikat@uni-potsdam.de
Ariane Walz
ariane.walz@uni-potsdam.de
I have only recently started with the City of Edinburgh Council’s Natural Heritage service. I work in the city team, covering Pentland Hills duties every third weekend, which allows me to see and experience the area first-hand.

Before working here, I didn’t understand quite how complicated the set-up of the Regional Park is. There are many landowners, with the Park area covered by three councils – Edinburgh, Midlothian, and West Lothian. The number of organisations linking up to run this enormous area is impressive – and I don’t know the half of it.

What I do know is what we do. We provide a service to the public and land managers. Both the city and the Pentlands teams are full of people who do what they do because they love it, and know they have a duty to make this best place it can be.

I really felt this during a recent weekend in the Pentlands when two of us rebuilt a dry-stane wall which had been knocked down.

We were amazed at how many people stopped to ask us about what we were doing, showing a real interest in the work we were doing. People were genuinely happy to see that their Council was working to improve their environment.

That is what I came into this job for – to allow people to enjoy their natural spaces around the city and beyond. My favourite point of that weekend was sitting in the sun, only the cop-stanes left to fit to the top of the wall, eating my lunch and answering “What are you doing with the wall?” questions. We completely rebuilt that section, my colleague and I, and it has given me a personal pride of that place.

Because of all this, my favourite place in the Pentlands is sitting at the top of the ridge in the sun, looking over Threipmuir Reservoir and down at the wall I helped repair.

Andrew Law
Natural Heritage Officer
Flying drones: What’s the law?

We are seeing more people flying drones in the Pentlands. This is concerning farmers, who have reported that these unmanned aircraft are disturbing livestock: a particular worry at this time of year, when sheep are lambing.

The law is not clear on whether permission is needed from land owners to fly drones on their land. As the Beacon reported in the last edition, when we focussed on Electrically Assisted Pedal Cycles, it can often be the case that legislation does not cover new technologies. It is therefore no surprise that the flying of drones as a leisure activity is not mentioned specifically within either the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, or the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

There are two possible interpretations of the 2003 Act.

• If flying a drone is treated as a ‘recreational purpose’, then people have the right to access.

• If drone use is viewed as ‘being on or crossing land in or with a motorised vehicle’ (exclusions in Section 9(f)), then the landowner’s permission must be sought.

It is, however, clear from the Scottish Outdoor Access Code that any access must be responsible and if flying drones were to fall within access rights, those flying them would have to do so in line with the Code’s guiding principles of respecting other people, caring for the environment and taking responsibility for their own actions.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), which regulates the use of drones, publishes guidance through the ‘Drone Code’ www.caa.co.uk/drones

This stresses the importance of responsible flying and suggests safe distances from people and buildings. The Pentland Hills Regional Park does fall within the controlled airspace of Edinburgh Airport, meaning that people operating drones over 7kg in weight must inform air traffic control (if the drone is under 7kg you are advised, but not obliged, to inform ATC).

Please note that this is preliminary analysis of the legislation and guidance. It is not based at this stage on legal advice from the Council’s solicitor and should therefore not be treated as definitive.

Martin Duncan
Access Officer
The City of Edinburgh Council
The past twelve months have been really encouraging for rural policing in the Edinburgh South West area, with a focus on better engagement with the rural community. Regular meetings with our partners from the National Farmers Union (NFU) and City of Edinburgh Council helped us to tackle the unique issues faced by this community.

Livestock worrying is still a problem, with so many of our farmers’ animals next to dog-walking hot spots. There were six reported incidents in the area. Each was fully investigated, with 50% of cases resulting in people being charged for offences under the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953. Going forward we will concentrate on prevention, and during the lambing season will increase patrols and raise public awareness at problem areas.

On a more positive note, we were delighted to deliver two highly successful Rural Crime events. In June 2016, officers visited Harlaw Reservoir with the Fire Service, Council and wildlife crime experts to give free rural crime advice to members of the public. Then, in December, we held our On-Farm Crime Prevention Event in conjunction with the NFU. Following Andrew Barr’s kind offer to host, farmers came to Harlaw Farm to receive free crime prevention advice from rural crime leads, PC Sam Campbell and PC Willie Johnstone on how best to keep their buildings, equipment, vehicles and livestock safe and secure.

Needless to say we hope to continue developing our rural crime strategy in 2017. An exciting prospect is the imminent introduction of Rural Watch – a scheme aimed at members of the rural community being launched nationally by Police Scotland in conjunction with Neighbourhood Watch. It will be an online platform where people can share and receive message alerts. This free-flow of information will undoubtedly increase awareness of rural crime issues both locally and nationally, and in turn make our communities safer.

Within Edinburgh SW Community Policing Team, we are anxious to hear about any other issues affecting our rural community and encourage readers to contact us by phoning 101 or emailing EdinburghPentlandHillsCPT@scotland.pnn.police.uk

You can also give your opinion via our ‘Your View Counts’ survey found at www.scotland.police.uk/yourviewcounts We look forward to hearing from you.

Update: on Friday 17 March, Police Scotland, NFU Scotland, and the Pentland Hills Regional Park held a Livestock Worrying Awareness event at Harlaw House Visitor Centre, with another one following at Flotterstone on Saturday 25th March. Although the weather was a bit ‘dreich’ at Harlaw, we had lots of positive reaction from the public, with many people unaware that they should phone 999 if witnessing farm animals being harassed (or 101 after the event).

Euan Chancellor
Community Policing Team 1
Ward 2 Pentland Hills
Edinburgh Division
The masts were erected in 1964 by the GPO (General Post Office, later privatised as British Telecom) for the University of Edinburgh. Dr L M Muggleton of the University’s Department of Electrical Engineering used the installation for riometer measurements during the International Quiet Sun Year: a series of coordinated Sun-related observational programmes performed in 1964 and 1965. A riometer (Relative Ionospheric Opacity Meter) receives radio energy from natural astronomical sources to determine how much radio wave absorption is occurring in the ionosphere.

The ionosphere reflects signals in part of the radio spectrum, enabling medium – and long – distance communication without reliance on satellite or cable links. Factors such as daylight and the Sun’s activity affect the ionosphere. Riometry and other techniques assist in predicting the best radio frequencies to use for a given time and radio path.

The type of aerial at Boghall is known as a corner reflector. One side of the reflector was formed by horizontal wires, a few of which remain intact, strung between the masts. An unusual feature is that the ground sloping uphill from the masts formed the other side. A horizontal dipole aerial was placed within the reflector, but it is not known how this dipole was supported. It could have been suspended between the guy wires, or some other supporting wires might have been deployed using the pulley wheels evident at the top of each mast. The centre-line of the aerial was directed at the north celestial pole.

The steelwork on the slope just below the masts supported a wooden hut containing a receiver, which was linked by overhead lines on telegraph poles to recording equipment housed nearby, probably in the brick shed beside the cottage nearest the masts. The shed contains the remnants of an equipment rack and numerous cables.

Dr Muggleton’s main interest was in ionospheric physics. However, none of his published papers make reference to his work with the Boghall riometer, and no written record of its use has been found within the University, so it is not known if any significant results were obtained.

Historic Environment Scotland have now included the site in the Canmore database at: https://canmore.org.uk/site/353075/boghall
You can find out more, and submit any new information or recollections, at: https://boghall-radio-masts.blogspot.co.uk

John Brady
We had over 100 entries in this year’s Pentland Inspirations Art and Photographic Competition, covering the subjects of Activity, Biodiversity and Landscape. The winning, commended and some other entries have been displayed at various venues around the Pentland Hills, with the final display at Whitburn Library from 2-9 May. Many thanks to all those who entered and supported the competition – the prize-giving at Swanston was well-attended.

Winner, Activity category was Steve Chambers, with his image *Heather Burning on West Water*. Steve was walking on the Slipperfield Estate near West Linton (not in the Regional Park, but we’ll allow him this one as it’s so close!), when he saw workers burning heather for moorland management. Steve didn’t want to disturb the operation, so fitted a long lens and fired away.

**Winner: Landscape** – Victor Partridge with *Winter Day*

**Winner: Biodiversity** – Erika Linklater-McLennan with *Honey I’m Busy*

**Winners: Art** – Claire Jones with *Through the Mist* and Graeme Donnachie with *Lochs and Hills*
Bats: The Marmite of the mammal world

Marmite – you either love it or hate it, and bats seem to elicit the same response. Despite being the second-biggest group of mammals with more than 1,100 different species worldwide, bats remain much maligned and misunderstood.

In Britain we have 18 different species of bat, all of which have suffered serious population declines over the past 100 years. Because of this all our British bats are protected by law. There are ten species in Scotland, with seven recorded in the Lothians. These seven include the noctule bat – the biggest species found in Scotland; the brown long-eared bat – with its huge rabbit-like ears; Daubenton’s bat – also known as the ‘water bat’ due to its habit of feeding low over the surface of water bodies; and both soprano and bandit pipistrelles – the flitting, fluttering bats that are most often seen flying in urban areas.

Lothians Bat Group has been studying the ecology and behaviour of our local bats for over 30 years, working to raise public awareness of bats and work towards their conservation. We carry out a wide range of projects and activities including leading walks and giving talks, rehabilitation of injured bats, visiting schools, delivering training events, and undertaking various surveys. We work closely with the Bat Conservation Trust, and throughout the year contribute to their National Bat Monitoring Programme (NBMP) through the surveys we carry out. Different NBMP surveys require different levels of experience, so we also run specific training sessions to equip members with the skills to take part in these.

One of our biggest annual projects is the monitoring of a multitude of bat box schemes in the autumn. We have many schemes throughout the Lothians, including collections of boxes at Flotterstone and Harlaw. These boxes provide supplementary roosts which are usually used in the spring as transition roosts between hibernation and maternity roosts for females. In summer, they are used by males, and in the autumn as mating roosts where single males are often found with groups of females with whom they hope to mate.

All our British bats are insectivorous, as are the majority of bat species. In fact, in many places bats play an important role as a natural pesticide. So, love them or hate them, bats play a vital role in our ecosystem and need all the support we can give them.

To find out more about Lothians Bat Group please email: lothiansbatgroup@gmail.com or follow us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/lothiansbatgroup

Natalie Todman
Words and photographs
Competition

We have four books to give away in this edition.

To celebrate John Muir Day on the 21st April, we have two copies of the latest John Muir Way Rucksack Reader guidebook, with all you could need to know about tackling this 134-mile coast-to-coast walk. Stretching from Helensburgh in the west, to Dunbar in the east, the hike through Scotland’s heartland takes seven to ten days (quicker if you’re on a bike).

We also have two copies of Scottish Environments by Alan and Moira McKirdy, part of the Scotties range of books published by the National Museum of Scotland. This exciting book is aimed at young readers wanting to discover more about Scotland’s mountains, rivers, coast, islands, moorlands, machair, lochs, rivers and flora – and is bang up-to-date with its topical discussions on climate change and renewable energy.

All you have to do to enter is answer the following question: How long is the John Muir Way, in miles?

Email your answer to: PentlandHills@edinburgh.gov.uk or write to us at: PHRP, Hermitage of Braid, 69a Braid Road, Edinburgh EH10 6JF.

Please let us know which book you would prefer to receive.

Closing date for entries is 30th June 2017.
Car parks
It is often assumed that winter is a quieter time in the countryside. Not in the Pentland Hills Regional Park. Anyone visiting Harlaw, Flotterstone or Threipmuir on a half-decent weather weekend day during the last few months will realise the hills are a very popular destination.

It’s so popular that the main car parks are full to overflowing on many Saturdays and Sundays. This occasionally leads to problems when cars are parked outside the provided spaces, which can block access for farmers with large delivery vehicles – and damages the vegetation and trees. So, to mitigate this damage we have put up fencing around the edges of Harlaw and Flotterstone car parks.

We have filled in the potholes caused by the winter weather in the car park at Little Vantage, near Harperrig Reservoir. There has also been an increase in fly-tipping, so we have thinned the trees around the car park to make the area more visible from the main road and hopefully reduce the temptation for people to empty rubbish out of their vans or trucks.

Paths
We have been busy improving access through the park. After receiving a generous donation, we were able to replace the bridge at Daisy Dell, Flotterstone, which is essential for the popular walk up Turnhouse and Carnethy Hills.

A keen group from the Financial Services Authority created a surfaced path over a very muddy area at Hillend Country Park.

The water-filled holes in the track from Threipmuir car park to the reservoir were increasing in size, so we employed a contractor to fill these with aggregate. We also replaced one of the self-closing gates along this route with a new metal one: we have found that wooden self-closing gates have a life of 12-15 years. By the time you read this one of the stiles in the Green Cleugh should have been replaced by a self-closing gate, making access easier for all.

Over the last few years two new “Pentland Paths” have been agreed with landowners. One is from Boghall Farm to Castlemaw Farm, and the other runs along the south shore of Harperrig Reservoir to link up with the old drovers’ route, the Cauldstane Slap path. We have now installed the new fingerposts marking the start of the routes and replaced some damaged directional signage in the rest of the Regional Park.

Nature conservation
While much of nature is sleeping over winter we have been improving the Park for wildlife. Some of the several thousand trees that were planted four or five years ago at Harperrig Reservoir had died, so the Friends of the Pentlands kindly planted 250 replacements.

Virtually all of the trees you see today in the Regional Park have been planted, or are descendants of planted trees. Redford Wood by Threipmuir car park is one of the more natural of the woods and is owned by the City of Edinburgh Council. However, most of the trees are a similar age and, being mainly birch (a tree that often only lives until it is 150), there is a danger they will all die within a short time period and the wood will disappear. Back in 2006 a small area of trees was cleared, in the hope new ones would grow up in the light created. This was very successful, with hundreds of young birch trees popping up. Just like growing vegetables or garden flowers it is better for the plants if they are not too crowded. The Friends of the Pentlands spent a day thinning out the trees, meaning the remainder will grow healthier, with more room to get water and nutrients.

Our Estate Team cut the two meadows at Bavelaw Marsh and Hillend Country Park. They were raked by the Financial Services Authority and the Green Team, which should encourage more flowers next summer.

Victor Partridge
Natural Heritage Officer
Bonaly Country Park gets its own section in this edition as I’ve found that it is a busy place, heavily used by various organisations.

WIAT (Woodlands in and around Towns)
ELGT have been doing some consultancy work for a WIAT application for Bonaly Country Park. If successful, this will mean major improvements to the woodlands in the area, as well as work such as upgrading of paths.

Damage caused by 4x4s
You may have noticed some damage caused in the Regional Park by 4x4s which had illegally gained entry over the winter. Most of the activity seemed to be at night, with gates and fences destroyed, and the dam at Bonaly damaged by people repeatedly driving up and down it. It is possible that the vehicles had been stolen, as they must have suffered a noticeable amount of damage.

We need your help to prevent this happening in the future. If you spot an off-road vehicle being driven cross-country in the Park that clearly doesn’t belong to a land manager or contractor (especially at night), please immediately inform the Police. We do not recommend approaching the occupants of the vehicles. Together we can help make the Park a safer environment for all.

Tree planting
The Regional Park has received 120 trees from eforests, a carbon-offsetting company. The first selection of hawthorn, birch, rowan and hazel were planted with the assistance of teenagers working with Green Shoots, the social inclusion branch of the Green Team. The plucky planters will be able to go back in years to come to see how the trees they have introduced to the Country Park are faring. The rest of the trees were due to be planted in mid-April by Friends of the Pentlands.

Closure of road due to replacement of culvert
Many thanks to the public for their patience during essential drainage upgrading carried out by the Council Flood Prevention team at the end of March / beginning of April. This will limit future erosion and flooding outside the Scout Centre and Bobcat Alpacas.

Tommy McManmon
Natural Heritage Officer
Biannual Report

Last year the Friends of the Pentlands spent just under 3,000 hours volunteering in the Pentland Hills. We spent most of our time doing regular gardening, litter-picking and maintaining paths. We also raised more than £1,500 at our tea and cake days at Harlaw to fund these works.

We received £12,000 from the Tesco Bags of Help initiative, which we are using to work with Dean Park, Braidburn and Woodlands schools to improve the Harlaw Wildlife Garden. We will have webcams in nest boxes and the pond, and are creating a willow tunnel and

den, a wildflower meadow and a dry-stone planter. The schools, as well as St Joseph’s and St Matthew’s Primary Schools, are also taking part in our Juniper Project. Pupils grow cuttings and transplant them in the hills where they will help stop the decline of juniper in the Edinburgh region.

We received another donation from Harmeny Pentland Runners, who organise the Seven Reservoirs Race every December. They passed on the surplus from the race’s entry fees to the Friends “in recognition of the fine work you do in the Pentlands”.

The picture shows the Friends’ Chairman John Surtees receiving the cheque from race organiser Moira Nicol.

We are also very grateful to the Balerno Ramblers and staff from Scottish Widows on their “Day to make a Difference” scheme.

After the success in 2015 of Bob Paterson’s book “The Pentland Way – A Walk Through History” we are launching a book this spring by another member, Martyn Baguley, called “Wildwood Legacy – What our native trees did for us”. The book tells the story of our native wildwood, native trees and the folklore that surrounds them.

Last year ended on a sad note with the death of one of our founding members, the above-mentioned Bob Paterson, who had worked tirelessly for the Friends in many roles, but was especially influential in shaping the Harlaw Wildlife Garden. We plan to commemorate Bob’s contribution with a plaque later this year.

David Syme
Friends of the Pentlands
We hope that you have enjoyed the articles in this publication. If you encounter any difficulties or disappointment, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the Park staff, or ask them for a copy of the City of Edinburgh Council’s ‘Make Contact’ form (for complaints and suggestions).

After you have gone through the Council’s complaints process, if you are still not happy, you have the right to take your complaint to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, 23 Walker Street, Edinburgh, EH3 7HX. Telephone 0870 011 5378. Generally, if you want to do this, you must contact the Ombudsman within one year.

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