



The Esk Valley Trust Newsletter

Spring 2021

Welcome

Spring is a great time for renewal, to blow away the cobwebs of winter – and not least to renew your membership of the Esk Valley Trust!

That is really to say just how much the Trust values continued support from its membership and it is at this time of year that we ask you to renew your subscriptions. I do hope that you will choose to continue to support the EVT.

This year emergence from winter into spring also coincides with what we hope will be a long-term release from the strict limitations imposed to protect us all from Covid. Let's hope that the future will come closer to allowing the socially interactive lives that we all wish to live. The last year has been appalling for some, hard for many and at least some kind of challenge for us all. In comparison with its awful consequences elsewhere the impact of the Covid pandemic on the activities of the Esk Valley Trust has not been truly life-changing but it has slowed us up.

In the last twelve months we haven't held any meetings apart from the AGM last May and action with landowners to overcome limitations in developing the North Esk Way has all but stopped. Quite understandably landowners have had other priorities and the strictures on people meeting have put paid to much practical work.

If you have been walking the paths along the Esks, though, no doubt you will have noticed, as I have, that the paths are being used by significantly more people than before Covid struck – so the work of earlier years has been worthwhile. Recent announcements give hope that we can begin to get back to some of the projects that have been suspended.

Having large groups of people meeting together indoors, though, seems unlikely to be either possible or particularly attractive for some time. Even if Government rules begin to allow people to meet in Church and Community Halls for talks and presentations it seems likely that many people will continue to be very cautious about spending time in such environments while Covid remains a significant potential threat. With that in mind we have organised a series of talks to be given by Zoom for the rest of this year to be sure that members and non-members of the Trust can enjoy a variety of talks safely. We plan to advertise the talks widely with the aim of introducing the EVT to a broader audience and attracting new members. Topics cover fish, pollution, nature management, artists and photographers and the Trust itself. More details



are given below. I hope that you will enjoy joining at least some of these talks from the comfort of your own home. I don't have a good answer as to why we haven't done this before – we didn't, but we have now!

The AGM will, as last year, also be a Zoom event, on Friday 28 May. I hope to see you there.

Although some of the more visible evidence of the Trust's activities has had to be curtailed for months there is still activity under the surface and I would like to thank the Trustees for their continuing work and also to Ian Brown for a huge amount of physical effort in helping with the thinning in the Hewan Wood.

John Oldham

2020 AGM and Accounts

The AGM on Friday 28 May will start at 19.30 hrs. As usual the Agenda, Minutes of last year's meeting and Accounts for approval will be posted on the website at least three weeks before that date. The accounts are currently being assessed and we are grateful to Andrew Turton CA for taking on the role of Assessor on a *pro bono* basis.

It's good to be able to report that the financial reserves have increased slightly over the year with unrestricted reserves now standing at just over four thousand pounds. This is a more comfortable level than in recent years (in relation to annual essential expenditure) and gives a little freedom to do additional things. Membership, though, has fallen slightly to 83 of which 25 are still unpaid. The Trustees continue to look for ways to strengthen support for the Trust through membership. In particular we are promoting the forthcoming Zoom talks through as many social networks as we can access to enhance awareness of our existence and activities.

Alongside the AGM John Oldham will give a talk about the EVT as part of the new annual programme of talks (see below).

Hewan Wood

From late autumn and through much of the winter the tree thinning programme has continued at the Hewan Wood. It has stopped now as we enter nesting season and the trees are coming into leaf. The aim of the programme is to remove potentially dangerous trees around the paths in the wood and to improve the overall health of the woodland by allowing healthy trees to grow better and to remove unhealthy and poorly grown ones. In places we have opened up the canopy to allow more light onto the woodland floor but have been careful to leave safe, dead specimens for their wildlife value. For the purist the woodland has a very high proportion of 'non-native' species but there is no intention of a drastic replacement strategy, however in one small area we have opened sufficient space to allow some limited planting of oaks to replace sycamore. Thanks to everyone who has helped with this activity.



EVT Zoom talks 2021

The new programme of talks is open to everyone, whether members of the Trust or not and is completely free of charge.

Zoom has come to be familiar to many of us over the last year, but if you are new to it, fear not; the process is very easy. Each talk has a unique 'sign-in' number. We are advertising the talks to non-members and they will need to register via the EVT website. Members can register in the same way (just go to <http://www.eskvalleytrust.org/news-events>). Alternatively if you receive this via email you can use the links shown below. Clicking on the link will return an

email to your address which includes details of how to log in to the talk. You are welcome to register for as many of the talks as you want to.

Talk 1: Thursday April 22nd at 19.30 pm

Dr Iain Reid will discuss:

Fish of the Midlothian Esks placed within the wider context of the Forth district: present challenges and future potential

Iain is a well-known aquatic ecologist who has been involved in a number of projects at the Forth Rivers Trust. He enjoys any opportunity to get involved in environmental education and to help people learn more about the rivers around them.

To register for this talk click on [this link](#).

Talk 2: Friday 28 May at 19.30 pm

John Oldham will discuss:

The Esk Valley Trust: What is it for? What has it done? Where is it going?

John enjoyed a career in agricultural research and has lived close to the North Esk river for almost 30 years. He has been Chairman of the Esk Valley Trust since 2015 and is keen to see the Trust enhancing appreciation of the Esk valleys by all who live in or visit them.

This talk will be given alongside the 2021 Annual General Meeting of the Trust.

To register for this talk click on [this link](#).

Talk 3: Thursday 24 June at 19.30 pm

Dr Anna Griffin (and colleagues) will discuss:

Managing river impacts in the Esk rivers

Anna is the river basin management coordinator for the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) based in Dumfries. She has a very active involvement in all aspects of river basin management for the Esk rivers including pollution and flood management.

To register for this talk click on [this link](#).

Talk 4: Thursday 26 August at 19.30 pm

Professor Roger Crofts will discuss:

The Esk valleys: working with nature for a better future

Roger is well known as a distinguished academic geographer with a career in many aspects of environmental and land management including having been the founding CEO of Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). He is a Trustee of the Esk Valley Trust and enthusiastic about everything that he does.

To register for this talk click on [this link](#).

Talk 5: Friday 8 October at 19.30 pm

Dr Joanna Soden will talk about:

Artists and Photographers along the river Esk

Joanna is a former Collections Curator at the Royal Scottish Academy of Art and Architecture. As an independent art historian she has a special interest in Scottish art since 1900. Her previous talks hosted by the EVT as part of the 2018 and 2019 Midlothian Outdoor Festivals were 'sellouts'. This talk is planned to be part of the 2021 Festival.

To register for this talk click on [this link](#).

Walks as well as talks

While meetings in person inside buildings are not on the agenda for some time we live in hope that by the autumn organised walks along the river pathways will be a realistic proposition. This is still in the 'time will tell' category but by the time of the autumn newsletter we hope to be able to give details for a series of such events.

Another story from the Esk valleys - *The Lasswade Churchyards*

Many thanks to Ian Young for providing this note on the churchyards at Lasswade.

On the side of the hill above the village of Lasswade lie the three Lasswade churchyards. Two gateways give access to the two old churchyards, the centre gate access to the former manse. Immediately opposite, the new graveyard has striking early 20th century decorative wrought-iron entrance gates with flowers, square pavilions on both sides with flanking quadrant walls.

The first old churchyard access by the left gate contains the site of the 18th century church of which no trace remains. The church, in cruciform plan, was designed by the architect Robert Adam.

John Clerk of Eldin (1728-1812), the seventh son of Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, lived nearby at Eldin. Clerk married Susannah, the younger sister of the architect Robert Adam. Clerk's aim in living at Eldin was to allow himself the opportunity to pursue artistic and scientific pursuits. An accomplished draughtsman, he was illustrator to Sir John Hutton, the founder of modern geology. Clerk, however, is best known for his *Essay on Naval Tactics* (1782) which he worked out with model boats on the high pond at Penicuik House. Some of the models survive at Penicuik. Lord Nelson is said to have studied Nelson's tactics and employed them in the battle of Trafalgar through directing the attack from a position to windward which follows Clerk's proposals. Lord Cockburn said of him "an interesting and delightful old man; full of the peculiarities that distinguished the whole family - talent, caprice, obstinacy, worth, kindness and oddity, equally fond of a joke and an argument."

The second of the two older churchyards, entered via the right-hand gateway, dates from the 13th century. The medieval church's site is now marked only by a few stones. The churchyard itself possesses many notable gravestones and three remaining burial aisles from the old, church. The first aisle is that of the poet William Drummond of Hawthornden, a bronze relief portrait of him over the door. The inscription is:



*Here Damon lies,
whose songs did sometimes grace
The murmuring Esk.
May roses shade the place!*

Drummond is one of the sixteen poets whose heads appear on the Scott Monument in Edinburgh's Princes Street.

The next aisle is that of the Clerks of Eldin. Round the corner the Melville enclosure holds the graves of seven Viscounts Melville.

Against the north wall a late 18th century gravestone depicting two mining surveyors.

Charles Kennington is buried in the Old Lasswade Churchyard. Young Kennington and his colleague Charles Jenner took an afternoon off to go to the Musselburgh races. Unfortunately they omitted to agree this arrangement with the management of the drapers shop in Waterloo Place where they worked. They found themselves, on their return, without employment. In 1838 they rented a property at the corner of Princes Street and South St David's Street and opened their own business - Kennington and Jenner. Kennington however retired well before Jenner who continued to build up the much loved department store.



Dates for your diary

Friday 28 May at 19.30 – EVT AGM 2021

Thursday April 22nd at 19.30 – Talk by Dr Iain Reid

Thursday 24 June at 19.30 – Talk by Dr Anna Griffin

Thursday 26 August at 19.30 – Talk by Professor Roger Crofts

Friday 8 October at 19.30 – Talk by Dr Joanna Soden

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