



## Welcome from Chairman John Oldham



It is getting a bit late to say 'A Happy New Year' to everyone but I hope that the part of 2017 that has already passed has been rewarding for you and that the rest of the year is at least as good.

For the Esk Valley Trust I want 2017 to see us make a step change in progress towards completion of the dream of having a continuous footpath from the source of the North Esk River in the Pentlands to its passage into the Forth at Musselburgh. I mentioned some progress in the last Newsletter and the Trustees

want to build on that to get the task completed. The main sticking points are to find an acceptable way from New Hall into the Penicuik Estate, to get comfortable access through the Melville High Drive, to find a riverside route into Ironmills Park from the south and to secure a better route out of Dalkeith Country Park towards Musselburgh..

### **Finding the funds to finish the job**

To complete the North Esk Way as a continuous path from the Bore Stane to Musselburgh needs effort and resources. Of particular importance is to reach agreement with landowners on the desirable

### **Membership.**

As ever we are always looking for new members. If you know anyone who may be interested to join do please encourage them.

route. We are renewing our activities on that for the sections that are not yet completed. Then, for those sections, we need to create a path that is accessible and comfortable to use. Having recently reviewed 'the ideal path' we know that we will need to build steps, stiles, bridges, a suspended walkway, fencing and pathway in places. We are now looking for resources to cost the project reliably and then to seek the funds to get the job done.

If you, or someone you know, may be interested in helping this project with relevant skills or with funds do please contact the Trust at the address on the back of the Newsletter. Success will depend on a team effort.

### Membership

I am pleased to be able to say that our membership has grown somewhat since the last Newsletter. We now have 100 members. This was helped by invitations from the Penicuik Community Development Trust to join them at one of their coffee mornings in October and from One Dalkeith to have a stall at their excellent event in the Dalkeith Library and Arts Centre in January. Occasions like these attract discussions with people who may not already be aware of the EVT and join on the spot. They also help us to strengthen our networks with local communities. We have also introduced a new category of Membership under the 'Associate Membership' category of our constitution.

### The Ash Tree

In October we had a remarkably wide-ranging talk from Jim Pratt on 'The Ash Tree; its use in the past and implications for its future'. Starting from the Nordic Tree of Life, through its use in Roman times and on to the structural properties of Ash and the current real threats to its existence from disease Jim interwove his expertise on forestry and , especially Roman, history and archaeology. An excellent talk.

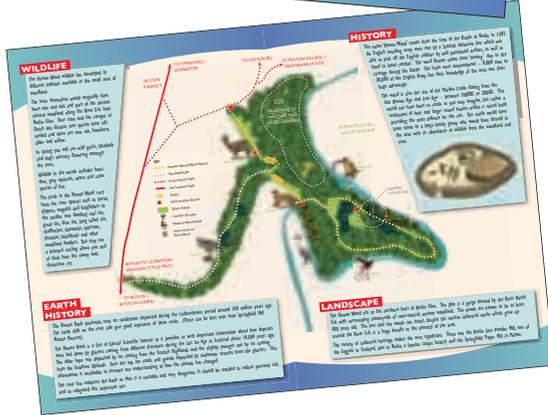
### Herb or Weed

On 27th February, Hamish Martin from the Secret Herb Garden in Damhead gave a talk on 'Herb or Weed?' at our usual venue, St David's Hall in Dalkeith. Hamish talked passionately about the development of the Secret Herb Garden and the many roles that herbs and sheer enjoyment of nature can play in our lives. From Dandelions to 'Sticky Willie' and even Deadly Nightshade he had something positive (though laced with warnings as appropriate) to say about all of the herbs/weeds that were mentioned by an interested audience of about 25. He also brought

a tray of plants for sale. There were plenty of takers. Many thanks to Hamish for an illuminating talk and discussion.

### A leaflet about the Hewan Wood

Thanks to a Community Paths Grant from 'Paths for All' we have now produced an information leaflet about the Hewan Wood. Copies will be placed in a weatherproof dispenser at the entrance to the wood and will be made available through libraries and other public outlets. We hope that this will attract more people to enjoy use of the wood. The grant also allowed us to buy loppers and bow saws to help with our regular maintenance. Their next serious use will be at the May clear-up.



## Midlothian Walking Festival

11th to 14th August

This is an event organised by the Midlothian Ranger Service and offers a variety of walks to encourage people to come out and explore the lovely landscape throughout Midlothian. The EVT will lead two walks along the North Esk Way on 12th and 13th August. Further details will be available nearer the time on our own website and on the Midlothian Council website.

## Welcome to our new Corporate Members

In the Autumn the EVT Directors agreed to expand the category of 'Associate Members' with a group of 'Corporate Members'. We already have four Corporate Members. The Allan Ramsay Hotel in Carlops, The Paper Mill in Lasswade, Stewart Brewing (based at Bilston Glen) and Watson and Lyall (Building and Maintenance Contractors also based at Bilston Glen) have all given their support. I am delighted to welcome them to the EVT and to

thank them for their support.

Further Corporate Members who are interested in supporting us will be most welcome (as are individual and family members). If you know of or work for a company that you think might be interested in becoming a Corporate Member of EVT please contact me at the address on the back of the Newsletter.

## The Roman Bridge at Penicuik

Between its source near the Borestone in the Pentlands and its entry to the Forth estuary at Musselburgh, the North Esk flows beneath many dozens of bridges; old and new, small and large, wooden and stone, inspired and prosaic.

In the Penicuik Estate, the inspired, old, stone Roman Bridge has recently been rebuilt and restored to its former glory by a skilled team of masons with support from Historic Scotland. The bridge crosses the North Esk in the bee-line from Penicuik House to Cauldshoulders Hill and the Ramsay Monument - built to commemorate the death, in 1758, of Allan Ramsay who was a frequent visitor to the house and its enlightenment gatherings. It is part of

the designed landscape commissioned by Sir John Clerk, 2nd Baronet of Penicuik in the early 1700s. The date on the north keystone of the bridge is 1738. The bridge has one main arch, two smaller arches, low parapet walls, torch holders and sentry boxes which gives the Roman form and is unique in Scotland.

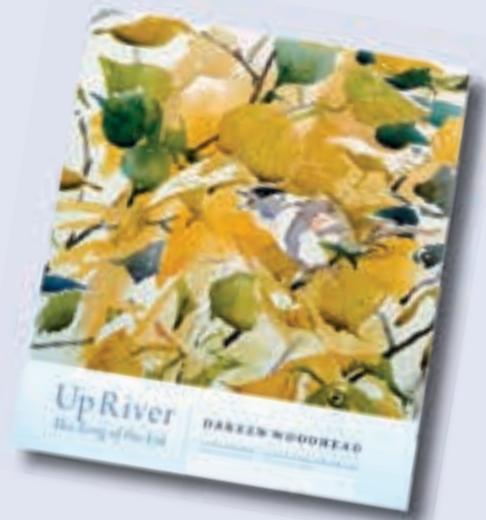
The pathways in the Estate have now opened up the steep bank on the south side of the bridge and once more allowed the walker to explore the area around Cauldshoulders Hill, Ravensneuk Castle and the Ramsay Monument with the splendid panoramic views.



## Autumn Talk

Our Autumn talk will be by Darren Woodhead. The date for this will be confirmed as soon as possible.

Darren is an artist and author, based in East Lothian who paints wildlife in situ, out and about in the countryside. He is the author of 'Up River, the song of the Esk' and has been artist in residence on BBC Autumn watch series..We hope you can join us for the opportunity to hear from a talented artist and naturalist..



## AGM and Talk from Professor Roger Mercer

This year's AGM and talk will be on Tuesday 2nd May 2017 at 7.00pm at St David's Church Hall, Dalkeith.

After the AGM business, which we will conclude as quickly as possible, we are delighted to have Professor Roger Mercer, Honorary Professorial Fellow of the University of Edinburgh and a former Chief Executive of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. His areas of interest are Neolithic and Bronze Age history in the UK and Ireland. Professor Mercer's talk will cover the ancient heritage of the Esk Valleys.

We will also be announcing the results of this years photo competition.

## Forthcoming events for your Diary

Tuesday 2nd May	AGM and Talk
Saturday 27th May	Hewan Wood Spring clearing
11th-14th Aug	Midlothian Walking Festival
Tuesday 5th Sept	Hewan Wood Autumn clearing
tbc	Autumn Talk

**See News & Events page of our website for full details**

## Esk Valley Trust Executive Committee

### Chairman

John Oldham                      Loanhead

### Company Secretary & Treasurer

Rennie Frazer                      Fairmilehead

### Directors

Roger Crofts                      Musselburgh

Pat Frankland                      Dalkeith

Shelagh Jenkins                      Loanhead

Jan Jerome                      Lasswade

Peter Raine                      Carlops

### Contact us at:

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