

Welcome from John Oldham, Chair



In the Spring Newsletter I mentioned the aspiration of achieving, in 2017, 'a step change in progress towards completion of the dream of having a continuous footpath from the source (of the

North Esk) ... to Musselburgh'. Well, we may not have completed the job but we have certainly made some good progress in the intervening months. Discussions with land-owners in the section of 'The North Esk Way' between New Hall Estate and Penicuik Estate have helped to clarify options. Knowledgeable input from Ian Brown (who many of you may know from his GP days) and Charlotte Picking, Ranger at Penicuik Estate, have identified good possibilities for a much improved route through some beautiful countryside and much closer to the river. Many thanks to both of them for their time and interest. We still need to specify the route exactly, confirm agreements, cost, fund and do some necessary infrastructure work. But some good steps have been made and we will stick to the task.

Further along the route the proposed development at Sheriffhall East, undesirable though it may be, might open up an opportunity to improve the pathway from the gates of Melville Castle into Dalkeith Country Park. We have commented on the proposal and suggested how 'planning gain' could help with our aspirations. 'Watch this space' is probably the by-word for now.



At long last I can report that we now have an approved and current Management Plan for the Hewan Wood (complete with approved 'Felling Licence' that will allow limited thinning where relevant). The plan has an approved lifetime of



ten years. Its approval (by the Forestry Commission) is important as it is a prerequisite for applications for funding through the Woodlands In and Around Towns (WIAT) scheme and others. The next step is to apply for funding to improve our scope for managing this beautiful piece of woodland.

Those who attended the AGM enjoyed a fascinating talk by Roger Mercer on the origins of the peoples of the Lothians. The waves of immigration into the lands that we now know as the British Isles show that we are all, in effect, inward migrants and that our current local affiliations are rather short term set against the passing of geological time. As Roger said, we may not be who we like to think we are!

A number of other talks are being planned including the one at the AGM. We will notify everyone in good time. So another item of 'watch this space'!

Hewan Wood Working Parties

Working Parties in the Hewan Wood have settled into a regular pattern. Once again this year we had an EVT volunteer day in May to trim and clear the paths (especially the steps) and tidy up some of the debris left by some less-than-caring visitors. Then, in September, Jo Cooke and the Midlothian

Paths Team joined us again to mend the kissing gate at the entrance to the wood, clear the paths and tackle some of the Japanese Knotweed by the river at the Maiden Castle. The Paths Team input is a great help and we can look forward to their help again next September.



Tea time for the path workers



Repaired Kissing Gate

Walking Festival

In August the Trust led two walks as part of the Midlothian Walking Festival 2017. The first started in Carlops, and finished at Penicuik House. Helen Budge, a well-known blind rambler joined this one and had this to say:

'The first half mile of the walk was a challenge: the path was steep and narrow so that Peter, my sighted guide, and I had to walk in single file, Peter's strong arm skilfully guiding me round rocks and boulders. Soon, however, the path widened out and the rest of the walk was fairly straight forward.

We followed the Fairliehope burn which sounded so full it reminded me of the rapids on the river Tay. We passed through Spittalfield, Amazondean, Kittlieknowe, Uphall and Brunston Castle, finishing at Penicuik House.



End of the walk at Penicuik House

We have been walking in this area for many years, but it is the first time we have encountered so many midgies. In fact, John had to shorten our lunch break because clouds of them descended upon us. Nevertheless, the scent of summer, birdsong and the sound of rushing water as we followed the course of the Esk made this walk an enjoyable experience for me. The feeling, too, that we were walking in the heart of the Midlothian countryside, away from traffic, noise and people.'



Helen chatting to John at the end of the walk
Typical of the weather this year, we began our walk in the rain, but finished in warm sunshine.

The second started at Penicuik Estate and journeyed along the river to Penicuik, then via Auchendinny, Roslin and Polton to Lasswade. Overall 23 people joined the two walks.

Combatting inappropriate behaviour along the Esk

An unfortunate downside of the beauty and seclusion of parts of the Esk Valley (including the Hewan Wood) is that some visitors are attracted for excessive partying, drinking and drug abuse. A main purpose of creating access is to encourage visitors but the expectation is that their visits do no damage and leave no residue. Communities in Roslin, Loanhead and Polton have been bothered this Summer (and before) by some unacceptable behaviour in and around the Hewan Wood, the Loanhead viaduct and Springfield Mill – usually on Friday or Saturday evenings. Community Police officers have been involved and some culprits have been caught. The advice is that if anyone spots trouble in action (or in the making eg groups of

people armed with bags of drink heading towards the woods) phone 101 and let the Police know. For your own safety, though, don't be confrontational. The Police have responded to previous calls and have made some useful interceptions. The Police will be helpful if we keep them informed.

There has also been a problem of fires being lit in the woods around Newbattle and the Ancrum Woods. There seems to be someone who sets fires against the base of mature trees and these then burn and smoulder until the tree is killed. The Fire Brigade is more than happy to attend a woodland fire. If you smell burning when walking, do investigate and if necessary, **call the Fire Services on 999.**

Assessing Accounts

As a Company we must file our accounts each year at Companies House. You can see the latest accounts on the web site. The accounts need to be assessed by a competent assessor before they can be submitted. Currently we pay for this service through a firm of accountants. The costs are significant for a small Trust, as we are. So we are looking to see if it may be possible to get our accounts assessed on a pro bono basis by someone appropriately qualified who warms to the aims of our Trust. If you think that you might know of such a person or firm do please get in touch (enquiries@eskvalleytrust.org).

Search for Director(s)

The Trust, which is constituted as a Company Limited by Guarantee, can have up to seven Directors but currently only has five. The team of Directors is responsible for the proper conduct of the work of the Trust and is the main organising group for our activities. If you would be interested in becoming more involved in the work of the Trust as a Director please get in touch through the email address: enquiries@eskvalleytrust.org

Darren Woodhead talk

On Friday 15 September the well-known wildlife artist Darren Woodhead gave a talk and demonstration of his remarkable watercolour skills at our latest EVT event in St David's Hall, Dalkeith. Darren braves all weathers to paint outside and the evening was inspirational. His next exhibition will be at The Donald Watson Gallery, Waterston House, Aberlady from 18th November 2017 - 10th January 2018.

2018 AGM and talk

The 2018 AGM will be held on Friday evening 11th May 2018 in St David's Hall Dalkeith.

Archeology At Newbattle



Newbattle Abbey College

Walking at Newbattle recently, you may have noticed some disruption due to works associated with the installation of a gas supply for Newbattle College. Whenever there is work carried out in the grounds at Newbattle it presents an opportunity to research the grounds for traces from the remarkable heritage of the area. In this case, the channel for the pipe was largely hand dug in conjunction with a team from AOC Archeology. Their results

Autumn Speaker evening

The Ecology of the Esk rivers;

Tommy McDermott

Friday 24 November

Tommy McDermott will give a talk on the ecology of the rivers Esk on Friday evening 24th November at 7.30pm in St David's Hall, Dalkeith. Tommy is an independent ecologist who has been working closely with the Forth Fisheries Trust in recent years. He has an active interest in improving the health of the waters of the Esk.

haven't yet been published, but they believe they found the foundations of a building which was an Infirmary run by the monks at the Abbey for their community and the wider inhabitants of Newbattle. It is a reminder of the size of the abbey where there were over 80 monks, around 70 lay brothers and other workers.

Cruden Foundation Grant

We are very grateful to the Cruden Foundation for a grant of £1000 towards the fulfilment of our aims to complete the North Esk Way. This is the second time that the Cruden Foundation have helped us and the support comes with no strings attached other than to support our broad aims.

Forthcoming events

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| 24th Nov 2017 | Autumn Talk: Tommy McDermott |
| Feb 2018 | Talk (to be confirmed) |
| 11th May 2018 | AGM |
| May 2018 | Hewan Wood Spring clearing |
| Aug 2018 | Midlothian Walking/
Outdoor Festival |
| Sept 2018 | Hewan Wood Autumn clearing |

Don't forget the website

Remember to keep an eye on the Esk Valley Trust web site (<http://www.eskvalleytrust.org/>) which is where information on all items of interest are placed.

Esk Valley Trust Executive Committee

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John Oldham Loanhead

Company Secretary & Treasurer

Rennie Frazer Fairmilehead

Directors

Roger Crofts Musselburgh

Pat Frankland Dalkeith

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