

# NEWSLETTER



## Welcome to the first edition of the Penicuik Community Development Trust Newsletter

The Penicuik Community Development Trust has been in existence since 2005 when a meeting was called to ‘save the Town Hall (Cowan Institute)’, and since then we have branched out into several groups carrying out various activities in Penicuik.

In this first issue of our Newsletter, each of our projects tells you what they’ve been up to, what they have planned, and how you can join them. We hope that this newsletter will make you aware of all that we do and the possibilities for all of us living in Penicuik. Come along and see what we have to offer!

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## OUR AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Penicuik Community Development Trust will be held on Thursday 22nd August 2024 at 7.30pm in the Town Hall (Cowan Institute). All members are invited to attend.

Not a member? Come along to the AGM and join there! For only £2 you can have a say at the meeting, and contribute to the funding of our projects. We’ll keep you advised of future events and happenings through our newsletters.

Want to join? Come into Pen-y-Coe Press (Tuesday – Saturday, 10am to 4pm) to sign up, or call into the Open House (every Saturday at the Town Hall (Cowan Institute) from 10am to 1.30pm)

Want to volunteer? Our projects are always keen to welcome new volunteers. Contact the project directly (details in the articles) , email

[penycoepress@penicuik.org.uk](mailto:penycoepress@penicuik.org.uk)  
or phone 01968 673767.

## Happy Retirement to Roger and Ulla Hipkin!

The PCDT and volunteers at Pen-y-Coe Press would like to express our thanks and appreciation to Roger and Ulla Hipkin for many years of commitment to the Pen-y-Coe Press stationery and printing shop. Pen-y-Coe Press was bought by Roger and Ulla in 2013 on behalf of PCDT, of which they are founder members. Roger and Ulla were active in saving the Town Hall (Cowan Institute) from demolition by Midlothian Council. Likewise, in 2009 the Trust had hoped to purchase Bankmill, the Cowans' old papermaking mill, as the most appropriate site for a papermaking museum, but the sale fell through, and it was not until 2014 that planning permission was obtained to convert the garage premises adjoining Pen-y-Coe Press to a museum.

The Papermaking Heritage Museum owes its existence to Roger's vision and scholarship, and the information panels that guide visitors on their tour of the museum are almost entirely his work. The Museum has always been an integral part of the Pen-y-Coe Press – important exhibits such as the Heidelberg printing press, smaller hand presses and trays of metal type are housed in the Machine Room at Pen-y-Coe Press, where letterpress demonstrations can be given centred around the big compositor's table. Historical items, documents, heritage books and old photos are also stored on the premises and form an extension of displays in the Museum. Even the printing and stationery business forms an exhibit of what Pen-y-Coe Press was and still is, as a historic part of Penicuik. As such, the Press has always been and continues to be the hub of PCDT's activities, housing a comprehensive archive of films shown at the Sunday Cinema (and available on loan to Friends of the Cinema) and a collection of past exhibitions shown at Open House on Saturday mornings. PLoTs or Penicuik Library of Things (the tool library) can also be accessed here.

For many years Roger and Ulla were foremost in running both Pen-y-Coe Press and the Papermaking Museum. Although stepping back from the shop, they are still very much involved with the other activities of the PCDT such as the Museum, Sunday Cinema and Saturday Open House exhibitions at the Town Hall. We will continue to draw on Roger's rich stock of experience in the preservation of and reproduction of facsimile books illustrating the past of Penicuik and its surroundings, print-runs of books by local authors like the best-selling *The Cuckoo Calls* by Monica Whitfield, and local history such as the life of Alexander Cowan, also photocopying and bespoke printing for regular customers who return year on year. We hope to maintain the link through Ulla with local artists by continuing and enlarging our stock of specialist paper and art supplies, and to be known for our selections of high-quality art cards, many designed by artists living in and around Penicuik. As the building is upgraded, we aim to continue offering art and craft sessions and to keep up the regular turnover of shop window displays reflecting seasonal events like Valentine's Day, Easter egg hunts, the Hunter and Lass, Hallowe'en and Santa's Post Box at Christmas, to name but a few.

We wish Roger and Ulla all the very best in their semi-retirement from what has been a focal point of their lives for many years. Like Bilbo Baggins at his 'eleventy-first' birthday party, there will be many a backward glance, but since nature abhors a vacuum, we know that life will rush in to fill the gap. Thank you for everything, and enjoy your new freedom!

## Pen-y-Coe Press

Viki Phillipps reports:

Penicuik Community Development Trust has its headquarters in **Pen-y-Coe Press**, which is described in our website as a:

*Traditional printing and stationery shop. The vintage shop and printing equipment are being retained as a living museum illustrating a mid-twentieth century retailer. Alongside the paraphernalia of traditional letterpress printing we have a large stock of stationery and art materials – and modern laser printing.*

Reviews posted on the site include comments such as:

*Excellent friendly service. Super quick and very reasonable. A wee gem in Penicuik.*

*And ...Top notch old style service. A real rarity these days. I'm looking forward to my next visit.*

In February 2023 I visited the Pen-y-Coe Press shop to buy some high-quality paper. I didn't know what size or grammage I was looking for other than it had to be good enough to ensure that I would become the next Great Artist and that gallery owners and very rich art collectors would be beating a path to my door.

This has yet to occur.

But, after a delightful conversation with Lynda, James and Roger I left the shop with the dawning realisation that in some strange way I had become a volunteer...

My first morning, a week later, was briefly interrupted by the very urgent need to return home for a quick change in to several more jumpers, a woolly hat and thermal underwear.

The heating in the shop and backroom has retained its adherence to the middle of the last century in so far as it is virtually non-existent, and sadly health and safety demands that we don't go the whole hog and light actual fires in the actual fireplaces. Given that we do stock enough paper to burn down the whole of Bridge Street and beyond, this is probably sensible advice.

Plans are underway to invest in a proper working heating system along with an accessible lavatory, and most excitingly, a proper workshop for groups engaging in all kinds of arts and craft activities. The wonderful Christine Finlayson is currently running bookbinding groups, and we are hopeful of more to come.

But, as with so many volunteer-run organisations, the challenge of getting enough funding is ever-present. At the moment, we are just about able to 'wash our face' in terms of income from our printing work and stationery, but this is a far cry from the seriously hard cash we need to do the capital works essential to get the building up to the sort of standard that doesn't require eight layers of clothing such as those worn by Arctic explorers.

Despite these setbacks, there has been an incredible amount achieved within the shop over the past year or so. Through negotiation, conversation and a lot of back and forth, our displays are starting to take shape; pricing of stock is nearly consistent, and although there is still an almost constant battle

with the printer (which often refuses to play nice) we are generally able to produce documents to a high standard for a highly competitive price.

We have a long 'to do/wish list' for 2024–25. Ideally, we will be able to employ at least one staff member with retail knowledge and an understanding of the printing business. We will be some way towards raising the funds to complete the building work, and we will have more wonderful volunteers to ensure that we are open and that a cup of coffee is always on the brew.

And whilst I still have dreams of being Penicuik's next big thing on the art scene, I have now learnt enough humility to know that I am better at finding paper for other people!

Come along – it's really pretty magical.

## Open House

Lynda Smith tells us about **Open House** in the Town Hall (Cowan Institute):

To many of you Saturday morning Open House, in Penicuik Town Hall, is a familiar port of call. For those who have not yet discovered it, what you will find is a place offering tea, coffee, home-made cakes and scones and also soup, open to all, whether members or not, from 10am to 1.30pm. For the first hour, you will notice a French conversation group gathered round one of the tables: this is free for anyone to join (donations appreciated!).

In fact, Open House was the very first project undertaken by the newly formed Trust, in 2005, intended to prove to Midlothian Council that the Town Hall was an indispensable resource. The Town Hall was, in fact, the gift of the mill-owner, Alexander Cowan, to the people of Penicuik, in perpetuity. In order to stress the importance of Penicuik's heritage, the early Trust members decided that Open House should always include an exhibition, and these exhibitions should present the history and life of the town. Over the years we have learnt countless intriguing and surprising facts about Penicuik. Much of the research has been carried out by Roger Hipkin, and also by the late Roger Kelly. If anyone has ideas for future exhibitions, please get in touch with the Trust. Recently we have enjoyed a spectacular display of photography from the Beeslack Penicuik Camera Club, and currently, a fascinating account of The Tree of Liberty and the Radical Movement.



Open House is a friendly space, good for meeting, making friends and enjoying company.

This month we even have new table cloths!

We would undoubtedly welcome more regular helpers, and occasional bakers, so please get in touch if you think you could help.

Meanwhile we are immensely grateful to several regular customers who help at the end of the morning on an informal basis, and we especially appreciate the unfailing assistance of Robert, the janitor.

Please tell your friends about us, and encourage them to pay us a visit!

## Penicuik Cinema Group

The **Penicuik Cinema Group** has had another successful year showing a wonderfully wide range of films – chosen, as always, from audience and volunteer suggestions. The range of films screened this past year included **blockbusters** such as *Oppenheimer*, *Barbie* and *Everything Everywhere All at Once*, **classics** like *Singin' In The Rain*, **special interest** showings such as the PenFest Local Shorts film showcase, and the screening of the **silent movie** *The Gold Rush*, which was accompanied by the truly amazing Graham MacDonald.



We were also very privileged when one of our viewers invited friends and family to the Penicuik Cinema to celebrate her 90th birthday – definitely the highlight of the year.



A huge thank you to everyone who has supported the Cinema over this last year, and we look forward to welcoming you all to our screenings in our Autumn term.

The Penicuik Cinema is run by a small but dedicated group of volunteers, who run each screening on rotation. The volunteers contribute individual skills to the project, including technical set-up, sound engineering, graphic design, marketing, baking, accounting and coordination.

Thoughts from our volunteer team:

*“I get to enjoy and share one of my favourite art forms with others in the community.”*

*“I love the variety of films, from local filmmakers to blockbusters and everything in between.”*

*“There’s been a number of highlights, but I think the PenFest Short Films we showed was a great night, a huge turnout, a great chance to put on an interesting event for the community, really positive feedback from everyone who attended, and Mose noting that he could be seen in the archive footage as a baby! “*

The Cinema plays an important role in Penicuik to bring people together for an evening of entertainment and help ensure the Town Hall continues to play a significant part in enhancing the lives of the people of Penicuik.

Of course we can’t do this without your support.

We need you to:

- Tell us what films you would like to see on the big screen.
- Give us your thoughts (good, bad and ugly) to help shape the future of **your Cinema**.

- Join our volunteering team – no experience or skills required.

Contact us :  [cinema-info@penicuik.org.uk](mailto:cinema-info@penicuik.org.uk) ,  #Penicuik Cinema ,  #penicuikcinema

A huge thank you to everyone who has supported the Cinema over this last year. We are currently having a break for the summer. However, we are excited about our return on **Sunday 1st September** with **Judy** (cert 12A, 2019, running time 1hr 58min).

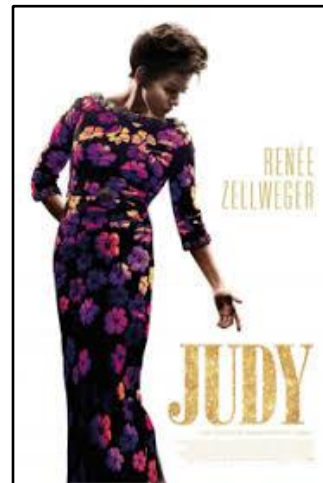
## Sunday 1st September

### Judy

12A - 2019 - Running time 1hr 58mins

Biography - Drama - Music

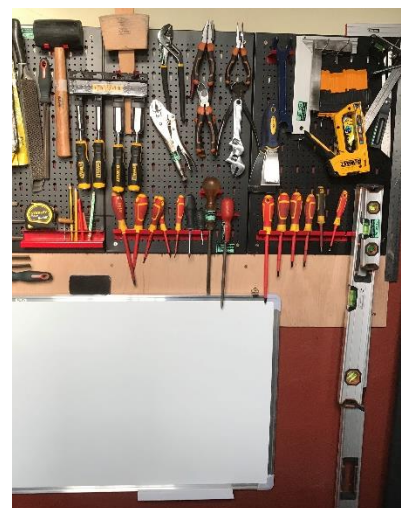
**Judy** is a 2019 biographical drama film based on the life of American entertainer **Judy** Garland, starring the amazing Renée Zellweger.



**Penicuik Town Hall. Film starts at 7pm, doors**

## Penicuik Library of Things (PLOTs)

- PENICUIK'S -  
**LIBRARY OF THINGS**



Why buy when you can borrow? Penicuik's Library of Things, PLOTs, has officially opened for business! Take a look at the new website, which is powered by MyTurn, a comprehensive application for sharing-libraries: <https://things.penicuik.org.uk/the-library>



Save your money, save storage space, and at the same time do a bit towards saving the planet. It's the modern mindset. Ditch the old assumption that more consumption is good. Embrace instead the Circular Economy aims, of lower consumption and lower waste, by sharing and repairing.

PLoTs belongs to a growing network of community sharing-libraries in Scotland. The network is supported and encouraged by Circular Communities Scotland, not least through the events it organises to exchange knowledge and gather information. This has facilitated, for example, the MyTurn tool descriptions written by the well-established Edinburgh Tool Library being made freely available to PLoTs and others. The MyTurn package developers collaborated with the Edinburgh Tool Library to deliver this initiative and they have also helped us by generously waiving their licence fees while PLoTs builds sufficient membership to be financially viable.

For a sharing-library to attract new members, research shows it should be well stocked, conveniently located, and open good hours. At this stage PLoTs is located within the old print workshop area at the Pen-y-Coe Press. The inventory of items is steadily growing, thanks to gifts and recent donations of desirable items, including a pressure washer, paint sprayer, and hedge trimmer. Good power tools are always in demand if you are able to donate them, although perhaps not chain saws – some things are just a bit too risky for lending to PLoTs members!

You can become a PLoTs member online: <https://things.penicuik.org.uk/the-library> ... What will be the first thing you borrow? What about pressing your own apple juice?

## Re-Cycles Penicuik



Re-Cycles Penicuik wants cycling to be affordable to everyone. Our small, hard-working team refurbish 40 to 50 donated bikes every month, more than half for children. Repairs too, to keep your bike safe and roadworthy. The service is very popular, and we are keen to maintain a good throughput of refurbishments and repairs so that prices can be kept low.

All sorts of people benefit from being able to own a bike. For some, bikes are essential transport to work and for participation in the community; and for many they are fun, giving access to the great outdoors, social activities, exercise and better well-being. And we do a wee bit of good for the planet too, when don't use the car! The planet also benefits when a decent bike is generously donated to be refurbished for a new owner instead of being thrown away.

Training our volunteer bike mechanics is a priority for many reasons. These include personal development for volunteer mechanics, improved productivity, and most of all, consistently high standards for bike safety and roadworthiness.

We have been very fortunate to benefit from grants. These grants have directly enabled prices to be kept low, even free, and importantly have also allowed investment in training and in improvements to our workshop that will help us sustain low prices in future. The largest grant was from Cycling Scotland's Cycling Friendly scheme. Their support paid for the refurbishment of 144 bikes, mainly for kids; and for three Velotech bike mechanics courses. Other valuable grants have come from Cycling UK, Levensat, a partner in the Midlothian Council Community Waste Fund; and from the Midlothian Climate Action Seedcorn Fund.

Re-Cycles Penicuik is based in the MicroShop Market located in the Penicuik pedestrian precinct. Our current opening times are Wednesday, Friday and Saturday mornings from 10am to 1pm. Drop in for a chat to find out more, or email [re-cycle@penicuik.org.uk](mailto:re-cycle@penicuik.org.uk).

Thanks, Penicuik, for your great bike donations! The donated bikes plus support, especially from Cycling Scotland, enabled our small, hard-working team to refurbish 40 to 50 bikes every month this spring, more than half for children. Repairs too! Find us at the MicroShop Market in the Penicuik pedestrian precinct on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday mornings from 10am to 1pm. Drop in for a chat or email [re-cycle@penicuik.org.uk](mailto:re-cycle@penicuik.org.uk).

## Penicuik Papermaking Heritage Museum

The Penicuik Papermaking Heritage Museum is open for visitors and we'd love to see you! Over the winter we carried out a programme of redecoration and enhancement to the display areas ready for our visitors to enjoy. We reopened for the 2024 season on 30<sup>th</sup> March and since then we've welcomed visitors both local and from around the world, all keen to learn about the history of papermaking, and its importance to the history and heritage of Penicuik.

A large number of our visitors are local, seeking knowledge not only of the history of paper-making, but also of its importance to the heritage of the town. Many have family connections to the industry, or live in houses built on one of the former mill sites and want to know more. A number are former mill workers, some with dementia, and their memories are shared with us and repeated to others. We've also hosted a number of school and community groups all of whom are keen to know about the papermaking heritage of the town, and to keep the knowledge alive.



Come along for a visit and learn about the mills on the Esk. Hear about Alexander Cowan and find out about why the Japanese visited Penicuik. Younger visitors can find the tortoises (and learn why we have a tortoise trail!). Everyone can try their hand at papermaking – it's lots of fun for everyone, whatever their age. We're open every Saturday from 1pm to 3.30pm until the end of October. We



can also open at other times for group visits – please contact us at [museum-team@penicuik.org.uk](mailto:museum-team@penicuik.org.uk) to make arrangements.

We're also keen to expand our team of volunteers. Are you interested? You don't need to have a lot of knowledge – just an enthusiasm for learning about the fascinating history of papermaking in Penicuik and for passing it on to our lovely visitors. If you're interested in finding out more, please contact us at [museum-team@penicuik.org.uk](mailto:museum-team@penicuik.org.uk)

## Midlothian Climate Action Network (MCAN)

Community groups in Midlothian have been encouraged to come together to work on the transition to life without fossil fuels. The result is the Midlothian Climate Action Network, MCAN. PCDT is a member of the steering group.

Amongst other actions, MCAN is investigating whether the Heritage Lottery, or other funders, would be willing to support a community energy scheme providing cheaper energy to communities across the south of Scotland. That is still pie in the sky, but we have to pursue such ventures in order to benefit our communities. We are also getting community groups together to encourage activities such as saving bikes, furniture and clothes from landfill through community initiatives.

We have also been asked to take part in a scheme providing equipment, such as heat cameras, for volunteers to take round to help householders identify what steps they can take to improve their homes. PCDT is setting up a new group to tackle climate initiatives like these, so if you want to do something practical to help deal with climate change, please email us or get in touch at the Pen-y-Coe Press.

## Penicuik Heritage Trail

PCDT has been in partnership with Midlothian Council on the project to improve the historic centre of Penicuik. This is now in its final phase and is intended to leave as a continuing legacy, as well as many improved properties, a heritage trail telling something of the history of the town. We are seeking a small team of people interested in our heritage, who on high days and holidays, and particularly on the launch date of 24<sup>th</sup> August 2024, will lead people round the trail. To do this you don't need to know all about Penicuik's past, as the boards provide the information, so this could be a learning opportunity for you. Please let us know if you are interested!

## Garden News

The Community Garden corner of Montgomery Park continues to take shape with new plantings in the ground of potatoes and fruits including raspberries, blackcurrants and jostaberries. These will eventually form a defining arc around our planting area – a sort of 'fruity fence'.

We've also been weeding and mulching the young trees in the neighbouring community orchard and crops are coming on in the raised beds. Earlier this year we built some new beds and will have room for new faces (and fingers) to join us and take on a bed, either next spring, or later in the summer

once current crops are harvested. Or expand our growing area in the ground – the potatoes are certainly looking healthy. And at least we haven't had to worry about watering them!

Next monthly get-together will be Sunday Aug 4<sup>th</sup> and we plan to make this a Summer Social with family-friendly activities (and cake!) – less work more play. And maybe some harvesting!

2pm, Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> Aug, hope to see you there.

## PCDT Projects – What is Missing?

PCDT seeks to support our community in a number of ways. Most of our projects started up because someone had an idea to help our community and needed a charity to help set up the group and give it the governance support it needs. So, what are you interested in doing that would be of benefit to our community? Do let us know if there is something you would like to start and need some help to get it running, and possibly need a charity with a track record of obtaining funding to help get external grants to help a project get off the ground.

## As Easy as ABCD (Asset-Based Community Development)

During COVID lockdown a small group met (on Zoom of course) to consider what we would want to do after the lockdown. We developed a simple vision for Penicuik, based on ABCD principles.

“We want Penicuik to flourish and be a resilient community where residents of all ages are able to meet their full potential, where people know their views are important and influence local decisions, where we work together to develop a very strong and capable community that cares for each other and that helps, sustains and supports people at every stage of life and cares for our environment.”

PCDT believes that new projects should develop from within the community. Therefore, we feel the following principles for projects are important:

### **Resident-led: Done by us, for us...**

We do what residents are best placed to do together, with our own resources, that we can control.

### **Relationship oriented:**

We build strong relational links and groups. Working together, a group is greater than the sum of its parts.

### **We do what we can do:**

We start from 'what is strong, not what's wrong'. No neighbourhood should be defined by what it can't do.

### **Place-based:**

The neighbourhood is where change happens, where local residents can get involved and make a difference, where local residents can see and experience that difference

**For all:**

We include all who wish to get involved. Everyone has something to offer, they may just not know what it is yet.

You may wish to consider the following questions:

- What would need to happen to make Penicuik a strong and capable community, where we care for each other so we live good quality lives?
- What one positive and constructive action would make your street and neighbourhood a better place to live for all the residents that live there?
- Our local environment is good and needs sustaining. How can we sustain and improve the places where we live and the wider environment?
- How can we live more sustainably, and help others live more sustainably too?
- What one thing do you like about living in Penicuik and what one thing would you would like to change about Penicuik, that its residents could do?

**What Can you Do?**

**Start conversations...** What Do I Care About? What Can I Do? Ask your neighbours what they care about, care enough about to take action to change.

**Start With What's In Your Control.** We can make small changes that make a significant impact on the quality of life in a neighbourhood. Start small and local, in your street perhaps?

**Who Is Naturally a 'Connector' in your neighbourhood?** Who, in your neighbourhood, knows what's going on and connects people together? Who is the 'glue' in your neighbourhood's community life?

**Create Connections to Make Things Happen.** Face to face conversations and connecting people is invaluable. What are your neighbours' dreams and concerns? Bringing people together can spark a positive change.

**Taking Action**

If you want to find out more or want help in starting a conversation or taking some action in your neighbourhood then contact the PCDT.