



Dean Village News

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www.deanvillage.org

Dean - a Doomed Village

No! Not now! But there were problems 80 years ago....

Over the centuries Dean Village, or as it was known then, the Village of the Water of Leith, was a self-contained, integrated village. There were many occupations, such as milling, bread-making, weaving, tanning, and dyeing. There were cartwrights, wheelwrights, and blacksmiths. The Dean Estate also provided jobs for farmhands. The old Bell's Brae house by the road bridge was a shop. In Damside there was a grocer's shop. And there were several more shops up Dean Path.

In the middle of the nineteenth century there was a considerable change. Steam power was replacing waterpower which drove the businesses in the village. As a result, milling and baking moved down to the docks, where the incoming wheat from Canada could be instantly treated. However in the early 1800s, a tannery, or as it was called then, a skinnery, was set up by the Legget family. This became the principal employer in the village.

In 1880, the proprietor of the Scotsman, John Ritchie Findlay, had a

(Continued on page 2)

grand house in Drumsheugh Crescent, which looked down on the village. He thought that the cottages along Damside were not fit for habitation, and so he had them pulled down and employed the young architect Sydney Mitchell to design and build flats suitable for the village artisans. Well Court was completed in 1884, and the Dean Path Buildings were completed soon afterwards.

In 1890, the whole area in Miller Row where Mar's Mill and Lindsay's Mill once operated, was turned into a distillery by James Johnstone, who was a partner in Legget's tannery. Sadly, the distillery only lasted for twenty years. From 1910 the tannery and the cottage industry of weaving were the main jobs in the village. But the village was thriving. Many workers were employed by the tannery. Villagers could worship at the outstation of St. Mary's Episcopal Church housed in the old granary at the bottom of Bell's Brae. Or they could go up Dean Path to the Dean Parish Church (see page 10). Primary school children went to the village school. There were market days in the village streets. Dances were held in the school playground. Picnics were held on the High Green. Edinburgh, although on the doorstep, was regarded by the villagers with some suspicion, one old-timer calling it "a grey, wild hole". Villagers could go there for their entertainment, but their hands should hold tightly on their belongings.

But there were problems within the village. Damside was then referred to as "Whisky Row", or sometimes "Legget's Land". Apparently workers from the skinnery would buy whisky at Burnside's shop, and drink it in the street. But the village was a thriving unit, where families had lived together for many years.

Then in July 1939, the bombshell was dropped. Allan Watt Ritchie, chief sanitary inspector of the town council, had decreed that 96 houses in the village, accommodating 241 individuals, were unsanitary. There were tenements up Dean Path and along Hawthornbank road and each had only one toilet for many families. The individual cottages and houses were in a poor state of repair. All these dwellings were to be destroyed. There were no plans to replace them. Residents would be dispersed to other parts of the city.

The People's Journal of 5th August 1939 reported that there were now only two weeks to object. The villagers were up in arms about this. Mrs Jessie Redpath at 33a Dean Path had a small shop selling paper and sweets: she will have to go, with no prospect of another shop.

A leader in the shape of Joseph Grassick appeared. He had actually formed a precursor of the Dean Village Association in 1935. In 1938 an application was made by the Association to the Dean Parish Church to use the hall for a children's treat. The application was refused because of possible potential damage to the newly-laid floor, and that the children were not connected with any organization that could be counted on to preserve discipline. The Association was disbanded shortly afterwards for the lack of a suitable place to meet.

On the 2nd September 1939 Joseph Grassick chaired a public meeting which decided on a plan of action. A petition for the building of new houses would be circulated in the village. There were a great many objections. The city council decided to postpone the demolitions while a village consultation was conducted..

Then, later in September, World War Two intervened. The British Government advised that all accommodation should be preserved in the coming conflict. So the village was reprieved.

For now. What happened after the war years will be related in the next issue of the Dean Village News,

Annual Water of Leith Clean-up

Come along and help us for an hour or two to clean up the river and its banks within the Dean Conservation area. Meet neighbours and local residents and help improve the look of the river in preparation for the summer. Equipment is provided.

Sunday 1st May from 2pm till 4pm
Meet at the road bridge in the centre of the village

My Friends in the Cemetery XXV by David Perry Basil Skinner (1923 - 1995)

Basil Skinner was a long-term resident of Dean Village and founder and chairman of the Dean Village Association. He lived for some time in the old house at the top of Bell's Brae, called Kirkbrae House. This house dates back to the late 1600s when it was probably a house of call for the travelers and carters making their way towards Edinburgh. From 1860 to 1910 it was the home and office of Cabbie Stewart, who ran a very successful cab service. The story goes that when Basil first moved into the house and went up into the attic he found several of the black toppers that the cabbies used to wear.

Basil Chisholm Skinner was born on 7th November 1923 in Edinburgh. He attended school at Harecroft Hall, by Wastwater, in Cumberland. He later attended Edinburgh Academy where he won the Aitken Prize in Classics. He went on to study at Edinburgh University. But the Second World War intervened, and he served with the East Riding of Yorkshire Infantry in Normandy, later moving to the Intelligence Corps.

Returning to Edinburgh University he graduated in History and won the Cousin Prize in Fine Art. In 1951 he became librarian at the Glasgow School of Art. He subsequently moved to Edinburgh to become assistant Keeper at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. His great passion was local history, and he was Director of Extra-Mural Studies at Edinburgh University from 1966 to 1979.

One story of his research studies is related by Tam Dalyell in his obituary of Basil Skinner in *The Independent*. Skinner led a team who were studying the old turnpike roads in the city, and particularly a stretch of hilly roads in the Pentland Hills. A horse-drawn coach was used for this purpose, and the students had to get out of the coach and help push it up hills. This brought home to students the difficulties of travel in the 1700s.

Basil Skinner was influential in setting up the Hopetoun House Preservation Trust. The House was built in 1700 for the Hope family

and the house interior and gardens were designed by William Adam and his sons John and Robert. But in the 1970s the estate of Marquess of Linlithgow had come into financial difficulties. Skinner set up the Trust, became its Chairman and put in motion a series of rescue operations. These were so successful that presently there are some sixty residential properties available to rent and offices for commercial businesses. There is a farm shop and a café and the estate hosts a wide range of leisure activities. The present Marquess of Linlithgow and his family live in the South wing of Hopetoun House.

Another of Skinner's projects involved the fate of the Union Canal. Stirlingshire County Council wished to fill in a five-mile stretch. Skinner convened a conference on this subject at Edinburgh University, which eventually resulted in this plan being dropped. This action preserved the canal, and eventually resulted in the building of the now famous Falkirk Wheel. Central Scotland may still be traversed by water from the Clyde to the centre of Edinburgh.

In the 1960s Dean Village had fallen on hard times. There were houses in disrepair, and vacant plots that needed attention. In particular there was the site at 3/4 Belford Road where there had been a Free Church of Scotland. The Church later moved to the end of Belford Road (now a hostel) and the building was an artists' studio from 1890 to the 1930s. This burnt down in 1954. In 1971 a plan had been placed with Edinburgh Council for an office block, which was far too big and totally inappropriate. Basil Skinner together with some other residents formed The Dean Village Association to object to these plans. A little later, another plan was placed to erect flats on the High Green. Once again the Association objected, and negotiations resulted in the planners putting in features on the buildings that reflected the character of the adjacent Hawthornbank building.

In all his work he was supported by his wife Lydia. He died on the 5th April 1995. A memorial plaque has been placed on the wall of the memorial garden at the west end of the old section of the cemetery.

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Deidre Brock MP for Edinburgh North and Leith May Surgeries

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Leith Walk: Friday May 13th, 3.30 to 4.30pm
in McDonald Road Library

Stockbridge: Friday May 30th, 1 to 2pm
in Stockbridge Library

Pilton: Friday May 27th, 4 to 5pm
at the Royston/Wardleburn Community Centre.

If you can't make a surgery, contact the constituency office at
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Telephone: 0131 555 7009

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Further surgery details are on my website at dbrockmp.scot



The Day the Earth Moved

On a day on or around 12th January the earth did move. The unstable land below the house called Broomieknowe at the top of Dean Path has slipped down the hill and burst through the retaining wooden sleepers protecting the Water of Leith pathway.

A photo taken at the time is shown here. Notice how the earth has pushed out the heavy wooden sleepers that were meant to hold the earth back. The force was so severe the whole path has moved towards the river causing the surface to break. For a twenty-yard stretch the path is warped and the surface cracked.



The Natural Heritage Officer of the Council was quickly on the scene, taking photographs. As a result the pathway is officially closed. On previous experience, this will not stop walkers and cyclists forcing their way through. But they do so at their own risk.

The damage is so severe, and the hillside so unstable that there would seem little prospect of the pathway being reopened soon. Extensive earthworks will need to be undertaken. And who will pay for them? The trouble all seems to stem from building of the new house on Dean Path, and the recent work there shoring up and concreting the back yard seems to have made things worse. What happens if the underlying earth moves so that it is suspended in mid-air?

A recent visit has shown that the slip has become greater, and the path much narrower. Yet brave, perhaps foolhardy, cyclists, and walkers clamber over the protective fences. This action is not advised!!

Dean Valley Regeneration Project

Dean Valley Regeneration Ltd (DVRL) has been set up to make an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant to regenerate and maintain the environment of the Valley of the Water of Leith between Stockbridge and Dean Village. DVRL was now successfully registered as a charity. A grant of £2084 had been received to cover a biodiversity study. Preparations are in hand to create a website which will be deanvalley.org.uk.

There had been a walk along Miller Row with David Jamieson (Manager of Parks and Greenspace), Linda Anglin (Saughton Park Project Manager), Jenny Hargreaves (Senior Natural Heritage Officer), and Helen Brown (Water of Leith Conservation Trust) on Monday 11th January. The object was to obtain a mandate from Edinburgh Council to continue with the project. David Jamieson welcomed the project, but recommended that the focus of the project should be on what was achievable. There would be no support on matters of landscape design, where opinions could differ widely. The Parks Division would support only work where safety concerns and damage to fabric were involved. A feasibility study should be prepared, which should then be submitted to the Council for approval. The Council would then appoint a Project Manager and develop a management plan to take over the operation. Linda Anglin had experience in applying for grants for the Saughton Park Project (to restore and improve the Park, information at www.edinburgh.gov.uk/saughtonpark), and recommended proposing definite achievable aims, emphasizing that the public should be fully consulted at all times. Subsequent to the meeting the Saughton Park project was successful in receiving a grant of £3.4m.

DVRL hosted a fund raising event at Bonham's on the evening of Thursday, 4th February. Robert Barnham and Kristina Taylor gave their talk on the aims of the project. There followed a talk by Jinny Blom, an expert on landscape design, entitled "From Historic Restoration to Reinventing Nature". All money raised would go towards funding the feasibility study.

At a meeting on 16th February, the committee debated the focus of the project. The main emphasis should be on the basic river valley between Stockbridge and Dean Village. The possibility of having a cafe and information centre could be considered at a later stage, as should the placing of a power generation plant in the river to provide a future income stream. There was also the question of whether the Doune Terrace Gardens and the Doune Terrace railings should be included in the overall application. Further consultation with the Council officers was necessary.

Jenny Hargreaves sent DVRL a walls condition survey along the river between Dean Village and Stockbridge which was carried out in August of last year. Each wall was rated firstly according to its height, closeness to a public route, and amount of footfall: and secondly as to its condition being a possible danger to the public. The

survey looked at the retaining wall above the upper weir (before the second landslip occurred), the riverside wall and railings and the low wall on the south side of the walkway just below Dean Bridge (tree growth causing cracks in wall, roots disturbing tarmac and general vegetation growth), and walls around St. Bernard's Well and Bridge (generally in good condition). . At that time it was determined that no urgent action was required. In February of this year the City of Edinburgh Council have made some funds available so that ivy may be removed from walls in Miller Row, thus allowing a closer inspection.

Robert Barnham and Kristina Taylor will be attending the Dean Village Association Annual General Meeting on Tuesday, 10th May in the lounge of Lynedoch House, Lynedoch Place, Belford Road, starting at 7.30pm. They will explain the reasons why the Dean Valley Regeneration group was set up, and

Dean Village Events

St Bernard's Well: The Well will open on the first Sundays of the summer months (May 1st, June 5th, July 3rd, August 7th) and the Sundays in August of the Edinburgh Festival from noon till 3pm on the 14th, 21st and 28th August. And also on Doors Open Day, Sunday, 28th September, from 11am till 4pm. Entry free.

Dean Village Walks:- There will be village walks on Thursday 16th June, Tuesday 5th July and Thursday 21st July. Meet at the top of Bell's Brae at 7.15pm. £4 per person.

Dean Cemetery Walks:- There will be cemetery walks on Sundays 26th June, 10th July and 24th July. Meet at the cemetery gates at the top of Dean Path at 2.30pm. £4 per person,

Police Open Day:- A representative of the neighbourhood police will be available for consultation between noon and 2pm on Saturday 4th June at the Schoolyard in the centre of Dean Village. If you have any concerns or points to raise about safety and security within the village, then come along and discuss them with our local police.

Water of Leith Clean-up:- This will take place on the afternoon of Sunday 1st May, starting at 2pm. Meet at the centre of the village by the old road bridge.. All volunteers welcome. Equipment provided.

Closure of Dean Parish Church

In the spring of this year the Dean Parish Church on the corner of Dean Path and Ravelston Terrace will close its doors permanently after 180 years of service.

Before 1830, those living in the Village of the Water of Leith, Dean Village and Bell's Mills who had a right of sittings, had to go to the West Kirk, now St. Cuthbert's Church, for their devotions. In fact only 143 people out of the population of 1356 had such a right. So there was a great need for a local church.

Dr Thomas Chalmers, minister and Professor of Theology at the University of Edinburgh, petitioned St. Cuthbert's for such a church. A temporary mission was set up in 1833 in the Great Granary at the bottom of Bell's Brae, which could hold a congregation of 400. Money was raised by public subscription, and a portion of land was obtained on the Dean Estate at the highest point in the area.

The church was opened on 15th May 1836, and Thomas Chalmers himself officiated. His sermon must have lasted a long time, as it covers 45 A5 pages of closely printed text. The opening coincided with a partial eclipse of the sun, so Chalmers gave an astronomical lecture in the afternoon.

But in 1843 the Disruption occurred, and the then minister Reverend James Manson and the majority of the congregation left the church and founded the Dean Free Church at the east end of Belford Road. The Dean Parish Church was maintained largely by the Headmaster and staff of John Watson's Institution, who also provided considerable financial help. The church recovered, and in 1897 it was reported that there were 850 sittings, of which 96 were in John Watson's Gallery, and 40 were free.

In December 1898, the Session resolved to build a new sandstone church on the same site to accommodate 900. Now, of course, the whole area around the church had been built up and there was a large population. There were 965 communicants on the roll, and 300 children in the Sunday School. On 30th May 1903 the dedication of the new church took place by the Very Reverend Dr. J. G. Russell, Moderator of the General Assembly.

In 1930 the system of seat rentals was discontinued, and quarterly donations were to be given by members. The communion roll had decreased to 585. Members were now giving using gift envelopes, which considerably increased income.

In 1945 the session defeated by 8 votes to 4 the desirability of having women as elders. It was not until 1984 that the first women were ordained. And in 1986 the church celebrated 150 years of existence.

The congregation has now diminished to such an extent the church is no longer viable. Worshippers will have to choose where now they go for their devotions.

Exciting times ahead for St Mary's Music School

By Dr Kenneth Taylor, Headteacher

As Scotland's only independent specialist music school, St Mary's Music School is not just a school for Edinburgh, but one for the whole of Scotland, with our pupils coming from across the nation and beyond, all gaining a place through musical ability and potential, regardless of personal circumstances.

The school offers a world class standard of music and academic education to musically gifted children aged 9-19 years. It is also the Choir School of St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral in Edinburgh. It is co-educational, non-denominational and has day and boarding pupils from across Scotland and beyond.

Scottish Government funding, up to 100 per cent, is available through the Aided Places Scheme to assist with the cost of tuition and boarding fees. School and Cathedral bursaries are also available.

Alumni include the international artists, pianist Steven Osborne, conductor Garry Walker, composers Helen Grime and David Horne and well-known comedian and television presenter Alexander Armstrong.

St Mary's Music School promotes engagement with the wider community and extends in-depth learning in music to children from other schools as part of its outreach programme.

We currently have 83 pupils, demand for places is high and we are at capacity in our present premises at Coates Hall in Grosvenor Crescent. It is part of St Mary's Music School's vision for the future that we have a building with both teaching and performance space.

In recent months the school has been working closely with The Royal High School Preservation Trust, architect Richard Murphy OBE and conservation architects Simpson & Brown on exciting plans for the school to move to the former Royal High School building at Calton Hill. Thanks to the support and commitment of Dunard Fund, the plans are fully funded.

The planning application is currently with Edinburgh City Council and everyone at the school is very excited about the possibilities ahead. We have been delighted and deeply appreciative of the support and enthusiasm that has come from so many people in the music world and the local community.

We are confident that the plans are in keeping with the architectural and cultural significance of the site whilst providing the opportunity for future expansion. The high profile location will make the school more visible in Scotland, the UK and internationally.

2016 Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given of the forty-fifth Annual General Meeting of the Dean Village Association to be held in the lounge of Lynedoch House at 23 Lynedoch Place in Belford Road on Tuesday 10th May at 7,30pm.

Agenda

1. Apologies
- 2 Minutes of the forty-fourth AGM
- 3 Matters Arising
- 4 Chairman's Report
- 5 Secretary's Report
- 6 Treasurer's Report
- 7 Election of Office Bearers
 - a) Chairman - Barry Mackay
 - b) Vice Chairman - Javier Albert
 - c) Secretary - David Perry
 - d) Treasurer - Jemima Barnes
- Election of Committee Members:
Caroline Gerard, Conrad Hughes, Barbara Mackay, Pat Sinclair,
- 8 Membership Fees
- 9 The Schoolyard
- 10 Any other business

There will now be a break of 10 minutes

Robert Barnham and Kristina Taylor will give a talk on the present state of work undertaken by the Dean Valley Regeneration Ltd.

An urgent plea - committee members please

This Dean Village Association (DVA) has been in existence for 45 years. It was formed to protect the environment of the Dean Conservation Area. We need volunteers to come on to the committee to continue our work. It will not take up much of your time, 9 hours over the year attending six committee meetings. We need your views on planning applications, environmental problems, rubbish collection, state of roads and pavements, etc. etc. Please, register your interest with the Secretary or come to the Annual General Meeting, and join us in our work.

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£25 for one-hour session. *Come with a friend and share the cost, not the benefits!*

By appointment only, **Tuesday to Friday**, time to be agreed. *Sessions are at my place, on Sunbury Mews*

For more information and to book an appointment, please email agathe@heelsoverhead.co.uk or call 07 969 228 389.

Spring Nature Notes by Barbara Mackay

“What a good idea” I thought when the Met Office announced that all great wind storms above a certain speed would be given names chosen by the public. Such appealing names in the main. Maybe an inspiration for an article in the Dean Village News? I was enthused. But trouble loomed: I had forgotten half of the names or mislaid the list and, on querying friends about such storms was often met with blank looks. What short memories we can display. I do remember Abigail, Barney, Imogen and Katie - eerie, ethereal Katie who whispered along the valley, but how to distinguish one from the other in EH4?

So back to normal business. It has been a turbulent winter. The devastation nationwide, and the human suffering are very much in our thoughts. Birds and animals suffered too. Dippers lost their waterside nests and found it very difficult to feed from the river bed when the Water of Leith is in full spate. I hope there are plenty of survivors. We shall soon see.

Thankfully life adapts and goes on. Those readers who live near the valley would have heard early in the morning the Woodpeckers, Great and Lesser Spotted, drumming away and warning others to KEEP OUT. It is pleasing that these beautiful birds, the Long Tailed Tits in their delicate dusky pink and black and with elongated tails, of course, have returned. Goosanders have been seen in pairs. And the common but welcome, Sparrows, Blue and Coal Tits, Blackbirds and Magpies are plentiful. No doubt the gulls from Gorgie Road are preparing for their raids on Dean Village, where they can spend the summer and live off the remains of food, often fish and chips, discarded by visitors.

At the moment violent storms have passed; Lawrence, or is it Mary, has yet to invade. We can enjoy the tranquility, and the clear signs of reawakening in birds, animals, plant and trees.

It's a *Braw* Café

If you haven't popped in to Braw yet, what are you waiting for? Our outside tables are back out for the summer, and we're open weekends and 'til late every weekday. We serve breakfast all day, and our lunch menu changes daily, with soups, filled rolls, salads, home-baking and lots more. We also stock a wee selection of grocery items for when you're stuck.

Additionally we love catering for parties, and can provide a wide range of whole quiches, pies, bespoke cakes, and almost anything else you can think of.

Get in touch with us via email (cafebraw@hotmail.co.uk) or Facebook ([facebook.com/cafebraw](https://www.facebook.com/cafebraw)).

For sale - cricket tickets

Two tickets for the Lord's Test Match between England and Sri Lanka are available for Sunday 12th June. Situated in the Upper Tier of the Compton Stand. Cost Price £50 each

Contact the Secretary, address overleaf

Dean Village News

This issue of the Dean Village News has been delivered to all residents within the Dean Conservation Area. If you have enjoyed reading this issue, or found it useful or helpful in any way, you can help by joining the Dean Village Association and thus assist in looking after our village.

Dean Village Association

Committee 2016 - 2017

Chairman: Barry Mackay, chairman@deanvillage.org

Vice-Chairman: Javier Albert,

Secretary: David Perry, 22 Damside EH4 3BB

Tel 226 7544 e-mail:- secretary@deanvillage.org

Treasurer: Jemima Barnes, treasurer@deanvillage.org

Membership Secretary: Caroline Gerard

e-mail:- membership@deanvillage.org

Committee members: Conrad Hughes, Barbara Mackay,
Pat Sinclair

Join the Dean Village Association

Yearly membership is £7 (£10 per couple) or life membership at £50 (£75 per couple). There is a concessionary annual rate of £3 single and £5 couple. Send to Secretary, David Perry, at address above..

The deadline for articles for the next edition of
the News is

14th August 2016

If you would like to submit an article for the News
please e-mail the Secretary

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