



Dean Village Association

The Schoolyard Opening



Councillor Lesley Hinds cuts the tape on the playbridge over “The Water of Leith”, assisted by young helpers. Chairman of the Dean Village Association, Barry Mackay, keeps an eye on proceedings.

The Opening of the Schoolyard

It was as long ago as September 2009 when Lesley Hinds and Dean Village Association committee member, Javier Albert, discussed the state of the old Schoolyard, and decided that some improvements were needed. Discussions ensued and in December 2010. James Galloway, Chief Parks Planning Officer produced the first plan for renovation of the area. This was put before members at the Annual General Meeting in April 2011. The members decided that all residents in the Dean Village Conservation area should be consulted. A questionnaire was sent to all 900 households in the Dean Village Conservation area in July.

The replies showed that members wanted a landscaped area, plenty of planted shrubs, seating, a litterbin, and an information board. They did not want large items of play equipment, but would approve a small apparatus. These ideas were passed back to the Parks Planning division, which came up with an amended plan. This was put to the AGM of 2012, and approved by members. At this point the Association expected to have to raise funds, some £40,000, and there were still some ownership issues to be resolve. Then in August of this year, the estate of the late Craig Richards, who owned half the yard, transferred ownership to the Council. The Council had also decided to fund the project, which was put out to tender and managed by Edinburgh and Lothian Greenspace Trust. The Inverleith Neighbourhood Partnership awarded the Association a grant to cover the cost of providing the information board.

Work started on the 1st September, and was completed in one month. The whole area has been resurfaced, in part with soft surfacing. Under the lea of the Dean Path Buildings and around the tree there are areas planted with ground-covering shrubs. The soft surface depicts the curves of the Water of Leith between Dean Bridge and Belford Bridge. A play bridge crosses “The Water of Leith” and there are also three stepping stone mushrooms. There is a small children’s rocker in the shape of a ladybird. The benches have been re-varnished, and there is an additional metal seat by the planted area. The millstones are still there but have been re-sited. A litterbin has been provided. However the Information Board is still in the design stage, and will be in place by the end of December.

Lesley Hinds conducted the formal opening of the Schoolyard on the afternoon of Saturday 15th November. Luckily we were blessed with fine weather. Some thirty residents and interested parties attended. It was reported that a local nursery school regularly brings children to play there. A young mother, new to Dean, took her young child there and quickly made friends with other mothers. So it is well used. The Dean Village Association wishes to thank Lesley Hinds, who pushed the project through, James Galloway whose team produced the plans, Julia McVean of the estates department who dealt with the ownership issues, Rodney Richards who passed the ownership of the land to the Council. Thanks are also due to the City of Edinburgh Council for financing the project, and the Inverleith Neighbourhood Partnership for a grant covering the production of the information board.

History of Ancient Dean

Malcolm Fry's book "EDINBURGH - A History of the City", first published in 2009, charts the development of the city from pre-historic times to, almost, the present day. The Dean Village features from time to time.

The earliest evidence of habitation was in the Bronze Age, post 2000BC. There was a possible port or trading post between what is now Stockbridge and Dean Village. Bronze axes have been found there by the Water of Leith.

The Iron Age followed the Bronze Age, and now a Scottish tribe called the Votadini were living in the Lothian region around 250BC. Little else is known until the first arrival of the Romans under Agricola in 79AD. A chain of forts was built between the Forth and Clyde, but, after a few skirmishes, the Romans departed. They returned in 138AD under Antonius, and the wall was built from Bo'ness to the Clyde. But the Romans stayed for only 30 years. In that time they had built Dere Street which came to Edinburgh along what is now the A68. The road probably came along by the Meadows and crossed the Water of Leith by Dean Village.

The Dark Ages followed. It wasn't until 1018 that stability occurred under Malcolm II (1005 - 1034). He added Strathclyde to the Lothians, and succession passed to his grandson Duncan, who was now recognised as the ruler of all Scotland. He met his death at the hands of Macbeth in 1040. In 1054, Duncan's son, Malcolm Canmore, gained his revenge by killing Macbeth, and became Malcolm III.

In 1070, Malcolm married Margaret, who had fled England with her brother Edgar and sister Christian following William's success at the Battle of Hastings. They were direct descendants of Edmund Ironside, briefly King of England. Margaret had been brought up in the religious life in Hungary. She transformed Scottish Society. She prayed for many hours each day. She fed the poor. She looked after and schooled orphans. She decreed free passage of pilgrims over the Forth. She turned Scotland from a barbaric to a civilised society. The old school in Dean Village has a roundel showing Queen Margaret teaching a child to read.

With Malcolm Canmore she had six sons and two daughters. The youngest of these sons, David, who reigned from 1124 to 1153, is regarded by many as the greatest of the medieval kings of Scotland. Living at the court was a chronicler of the times Ailred, a Cistercian monk from Rievaulx Abbey in Yorkshire. At the same time St. Bernard of Clairvaux, also a Cistercian, was ministering in France. Ailred later became known as the Bernard of the north. Perhaps some confusion exists here, resulting in an area of Stockbridge being named after St. Bernard.

David established a number of burghs throughout Scotland. Burgesses were given strips of land on which they had to build their businesses. The King received revenue from the burgesses who enjoyed privileged trading facilities. King David granted a Royal Charter to the Baxters of Dean who went on to greater security, so that by the middle of the 16th century, eleven mills were working in Dean Village.

My Friends in the Cemetery XXI by David Perry
Frederick William P. Wyndham (1855 - 1930)
James Brown Howard (1841 - 1895)

Wyndham and Howard formed a partnership in 1883 to build and run the Royal Lyceum Theatre. Both were already well known as actors, producers and managers throughout the country.

James Howard was born in Ireland and started his career as a comedy actor. He came to Edinburgh and in 1876 formed a business partnership with Robert Wyndham, who was the principal actor at the Theatre Royal. Robert's son, Frederick, followed in his father's career and after Robert retired in 1883 carried on the partnership with Howard. They leased the Royalty Theatre, Glasgow, and put on the pantomime "Forty Thieves". They received financial backing from Baillie Michael Simons who was head of the largest firm of fruit importers and brokers in Britain. Simons formally made the partnership into a company, Howard and Wyndham Ltd, in 1895. The company went on to own the Theatre Royal in Edinburgh and Glasgow's Theatre Royal and Royalty Theatre. Sadly, Howard died of a stroke a few weeks after the company was formed.

The company went on to own many other theatres in Scotland and England. It put on drama, repertory and opera. But their most well known productions were pantomimes, which continued over a span of sixty years. The first pantomime at the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh was their favourite "Forty Thieves" in 1895, and the first one at the King's Theatre, Edinburgh was "Cinderella" in 1906. There followed productions of "Sleeping Beauty", "Aladdin", "Dick Whittington", "Robinson Crusoe", "The Invisible Prince", "Little Red Riding Hood", "Jack and the Beanstalk", "Babes in the Wood", "Humpty Dumpty", "Old King Cole", "The House that Jack built", "Sinbad" and many more.

Fred Wyndham retired as managing director in 1928. The succeeding director, Ernest Simons, purchased the King's Theatre, Edinburgh and made it the company's headquarters. The company grew to over twenty theatres, either owned or managed. When STV started in 1957,

the company owned shares, and provided staff and entertainers. But over the next twenty years all the theatres in England and Scotland were sold, many to city councils.

There is a monument to each of these two impresarios in Dean Cemetery. Each monument has a full stone relief of their heads. Both were extremely well thought of by their families, friends and colleagues. On Howard's stone is written: -

“After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well”

“Erected in affectionate remembrance by the employees of
THE ROYAL LYCEUM THEATRE
together with numerous professional friends.”

And on Wyndham's stone: -

“Ever kind and generous husband, greatly loved, remembered always. Son of the Wyndhams who established modern theatre in Edinburgh, and co-founder of the firm of Howard and Wyndham. An actor of natural talent, a producer of rare ability. A manager to inspire loyalty and give encouragement to others.”

And later was added:

Louisa Isabella Wyndham, widow of Frederick William P Wyndham, died 23rd November 1932.

Douglas House and Belford House

The development company AMA Ltd. have put in a planning application for Douglas House and Belford House. The plan involves complete demolition of Belford House, building in place apartments and town houses down Sunbury Mews. Douglas House will be retained but the interior will be completely redesigned. There will be an underground car park for residents.

The plans were submitted on 30th October 2014. The plan number is 14/04512/FUL. To see the plans go onto the City of Edinburgh's Council website, and on to their “View plans” area. Be warned! There are 62 documents submitted. Good luck!



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Quiz Time

Here are two more conundrums from the Radio 4's Round Britain Quiz series, where teams from various regions attempt to solve puzzles sent in by listeners.

What links the following:-

a former MP of Montgomeryshire

merry brandybuck

a risky opening

the length of forearm

creator of Psammead

apochryphal book

And to whom or what do these numbers refer:-

C33, A285, 4664

Answers on page 15.

Problems with walls

The bottom of Bell's Brae and the start of Miller Row are divided by a wall. On the Miller Row side a tree had been growing ever larger out of the wall. The stonework was becoming disturbed, resulting in a distinct bulge which could only become worse, and, therefore, unsafe.

The condition of this wall was reported to the Council. The wall was inspected and, shortly afterwards, remedial work was initiated. The railing on top of the wall was removed and the wall largely dismantled to remove the tree roots. The wall was then rebuilt, and the railing replaced. The result is a splendid, and safe, new wall.

While this was occurring another wall became unsafe. Just down from the top of Miller Row is the area where Lindsay's Mill once stood, now marked with three mill-stones. One can view the lower weir from here. The wall there has become severely cracked. The area has been cordoned off, and repairs are awaited.

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Memories of Dean Village School by Francis Jack

The School itself has not changed externally as viewed from Dean Path, other than the addition of an external access door with cupola to give access to the modern flats that are now in the school building. Pupils used to access the school via the entrance next to the Water of Leith. Classrooms were heated by open coal fires. Pupils were summoned to school in the morning by an external bell that was rung from the tower and can still be seen on the building today. Teachers would also come into the front playground and ring a hand bell. I lived in Randolph Crescent at the time, and much to my mothers chagrin, I was occasionally found to be sitting cross-legged, reading on my bedroom floor in my vest and pants when the school bell was ringing!

Pupils were accompanied across Queensferry Road at the top of Bell's Brae by a policeman in uniform with whom I was very impressed. I used to ask him to show me his truncheon that he carried with him at all times, only to be met with a gruff "no". Pupils would receive free school milk and if you were a good pupil, you would be given a metal cap with a sharp spike inside to perforate the foil caps of the bottles and insert a straw. These days, the health and safety executive would have a fit in winter, when the milk was left outside and had frozen, the cream on top of the bottle was sometimes an inch proud of the top of the bottle by morning time.

Pupils generally used to write on slates set within a wooden frame. There were slots in the desks so that the slates could be held vertically. Girls brought pieces of cloth which could be dampened to erase completed work. Boys like me would spit upon the slate and erase with the sleeve of their jumper - not terribly hygienic. There were visits from nurses - called the "nit-nurse" - who checked the pupils for head lice. There was a considerable amount of infestation.

The smell that pervaded the school was that of school dinner cabbage and disinfectant. School dinners were delivered in metal boxes which were dragged into the school with hooks, because they were too heavy to lift! Good Scottish stodge to keep us going through winter - a basic meal of potatoes and vegetables was important after the war as rationing was still in place until 1954.

The majority of the teachers were women as a direct result of the Second World War. I remember Messrs. Henderson and Munnoch being the head teachers. Miss Dobson was the "first babies" teacher, and taught children of 5- and 6-years old. She would discipline them when needed by smacking the knuckles of their hands with a carpenter's pencil. And they called them the "good old days". One of the most memorable teachers was Mrs. Hilda Grieg. She embarrassed me completely by taking my hand at the end of the school leaving party for the pupils and picking me out as her dance partner. To a 12-year-old boy, there was nothing more embarrassing!

The Village and surroundings

When I attended the school, the village could only be described as being a very poor area. The majority of residents didn't have much, some children came to school with no socks on, only bare feet in boots. The Water of Leith was considered to be very dangerous for the pupils. When the river was high and flooding we used to dare each other to run across the Bailey Bridge, even though the deck was submerged. When the river was in full spate it was quite an intimidating sight, as the water cascaded over the weir, which we used to call the waterfall. During the time that I was at the school the old mill building that was opposite, and now converted into flats, was in a ruinous state. There were no windows, and it was generally in very poor repair.

I believe that the flats in Well Court had communal external toilets. I remember being in the building below the clock tower and, of all things, there were large diameter fat fryers making potato crisps! Was that the start of Smith's crisps, I do not know. (*Ed: I think this was the origin of Walker's crisps*). The village also had a tannery, and, depending on the direction of the wind, the smell could be overpowering. I remember seeing sheepskins being brought to and from the tannery on a very large horse and cart. I used to get upset when I saw the horse being whipped as he struggled to go up and down the cobbled surface of Bell's Brae, with sparks flying from the shoes on his hooves as he made the effort.

Opposite Well Court, across the water, was an elevated area of steep sloping ground which was known locally as the High Green. Ruffians like me would take tin trays and sledge from the top of the Green to the bottom when it had snowed. There was a drop of some fifteen feet from the bottom of the Green to the side of the water - as far as I know everyone who did this survived, but it would have been a close call if they had slipped. The modern flats now opposite Well Court now sit where I earned my sporting prowess.

(Editor's note: Francis Jack has given a powerful account of the life and times of the School and the village shortly after the conclusion of the second world war.. The News would appreciate any comments from readers who were either his contemporaries, or can relate experiences as the village moved into the sixties and seventies. Anyone who would like to contact Francis directly may do so at his e-mail address of francismjack@gmail.com.)

www.deanvillage.org

Registered Scottish Charity SC000404, Dean Village Association (DVA)

Wanted

Dean Village Activists

No, we are not advocating Independence for Dean Village.

But we do need new members to come on the committee to ensure that our work can continue far into the future.

According to our constitution the objects of the Association are:

- the maintenance and improvement of the amenity of the Dean Village Conservation Area, its environs and other matters affecting residents
- the protection and preservation of the landscape and historical and architectural heritage
- the promotion of community interests of its residents.

In the past two years the Association has achieved the following: -

- Up-graded the Schoolyard between Damside and Dean Path into children's play area, a rest area for residents and visitors, and a centre for information regarding the history and architecture of Dean Village
- Participated in the objections to the original plans in demolishing Douglas House and Belford House, resulting in a new plan which retains the facade of Douglas house
- Provided a hand-rail down the Convening Court steps
- Restored the handrail on the corner of Belford Mews, and repaired the hand-rail down Bell's Brae
- Replaced areas of tarmac with setts down Bell's Brae
- Reported the dangerous wall between Bell's Brae and Miller Row, resulting in a tree being removed and the wall rebuilt
- Restored the telephone box to its upright position

We need to keep vigilant so that our environment is kept up to standard. We also need volunteers to train as guides for our village and cemetery walks. The Association would welcome new members onto the committee. If you are interested in our work, please contact the Secretary, David Perry, (contact details on the back page).

Mark Lazarowicz, MP

Member of Parliament for Edinburgh North
& Leith



Weekly Surgeries (Friday)

(No Appointment Required)

4.00pm Stockbridge Library, Hamilton Place

5.00pm Constituency Office, 5 Croall Place

Constituency Office

Mon-Fri 9.30-12.30 - 1.30-4.30

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Dean Village Matters

St Bernard's Well: During the summer collections at the Well raised £175.93, donations passed on to the Edinburgh World Heritage Trust in recognition of their restoration of ST. Bernard's Well, part of the Twelve Monuments project. The Well will reopen on the first Sundays of the summer months viz: April 5th, May 3rd, June 7th and July 5th, the Sundays of the Edinburgh Festival, all from noon till 3pm, and Sunday 27th September, Doors Open Day, from 11am till 4pm. Entry free.

The Burns Bench: The missing plaque on the bench by the old bridge has been replaced, and the bench restored in its original position.

Water of Leith Walkway: at long last the river path between Dean Village and Belford Bridge has been re-opened. Remedial work was completed by 29th October. Large wooden sleepers have been placed to shore up the steep banking. A brand new metal fence has appeared by the riverside. Great to be walking there again.

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This Summer issue only goes to members of
the Dean Village Association

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Winter Nature Notes by Barbara Mackay

Reading my most recent notes I see how life jumps from the pages being very full, audible and visible.

After this period of activity in late spring and early summer, we have had rain, lots of rain, and high, unrelenting winds leaving devastation behind. An old, large crack willow on the bank opposite was a victim and finally ‘cracked’, sadly bringing down with it many nests and dreys, and, most importantly, a haven of safety for wild life. Did you know that a mature tree can shed between 20,000 to 50,000 leaves in autumn?

A period of relative silence followed. No finches, no tits nor sparrows nor robins visited the feeders. Then in the first week of November some reappeared. Two brilliant kingfishers flew downstream and two dippers bobbed around for a few days by the weir. A long tailed tit came too, unusually on its own and briefly. They are gregarious birds and love to party in large numbers. I do hope she/he found some playmates.

Bats! I did touch upon them last time. They are the only flying mammal. There are many types and they have fascinating names- Whiskered bat, Natterers bat (named by a lady biologist?), Horseshoe bat, and Pipistrelle - which is our local bat.

The Pipistrelle is the smallest British bat and with wings folded can fit into a matchbox. Its diet is insects and it lives in the roofs of houses. The best time to spot them late in the year is on Bonfire Night when the fires light up the skies and attract insects. If disturbed during hibernation bats can feign death. They are low flying and their hearing is acute. No malicious gossiping when they are about! Bats are not blind, nor do they live in belfries and they are certainly not ‘batty’.

Have a pleasant Christmas and New Year.

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Somehow it's that time of year again, so we're whipping up a storm of delicious seasonal food. Try our spiced plum cakes, hearty Scotch broth, or hot sausage stovies. Have a peek at our Facebook page for each day's fresh menu (facebook.com/cafebraw).

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Quiz Answers

All the answers end in the three letters b-i-t. In order:-

Lembit (Opik of that ilk, Lib. Dem. MP from 1997 to 2010)

hobbit, (a character in JRR Tolkien's classic)

gambit (a chess move in which a player offers a piece to be taken)

cubit (from elbow to tip of middle finger)

Nesbit (E, author of "Five Children and It", it being the Psammead)

the Book of Tobit (is listed in Article VI of the 39 Articles of the Church of England).

And the numbers refers to the following prisoners:-

Oscar Wilde- Prisoner number C3.3 in Reading Jail (1896-7, died 1900)

Al Capone- Imprisoned in Alcatraz, paroled 1939, died 1947

Nelson Mandela- Initially imprisoned on Robbin Island, freed 1990

Dean Village Association

Committee 2014/2015

Chairman: Barry Mackay, 3 Sunbury Place
Tel: 226 5219, e-mail:- barrymackay@tiscali.co.uk

Vice-Chairman: Javier Albert,
e-mail:- jamer@gmail.com

Secretary: David Perry, 22 Damside
Tel 226 7544 e-mail:- dav12per@btinternet.com

Acting Treasurer: Barry Mackay

Membership Secretary: Caroline Gerard, 6 Belford
Mews, e-mail:- caroline.gerard@btinternet.com

Committee members: Pat Sinclair, Conrad Hughes,
Mignonne Khazaka

Dean Village News

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

16th March 2015

If you would like to submit an article for the News
please e-mail the Editor at dav12per@btinternet.com

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