



Dean Village News

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www.deanvillage.org

How Dean got its bridge.

It is autumn, 1825. John Learmonth, the senior partner in the family's coach-building business, has recently feued 133 acres of the Dean Estate from Sir John Nisbet. He stands on the southern boundary of his land, looking across the abyss - the Dean - created by the Water of Leith as it cut its way through the rock over the centuries. 100 feet below, the river flow drives the mills of the Village of the Water of Leith. And 500 feet across the ravine, on Randolph Cliff, he can see the grand new buildings going up in the New Town. Learmonth wishes to build on this land. And so he and Nisbet approach James Jardine, Civil Engineer, to design a bridge to cross the Dean.

He did not know that earlier that year the Trustees of Cramond District had already employed Jardine to survey and design such a bridge. The road to Edinburgh from the north crossed the rickety Belford Bridge with its steep gradients, along Belford Road to Drumsheugh Toll, where dues were paid, causing hold-ups. The road then swung to the south, through the New Town and into old Edinburgh. The Trustees wanted a better road, and for it to be free of tolls.

Jardine produced a design which was approved by the Trustees and by Learmonth, who promised money in exchange for full public rights. In 1826 the sponsors asked Jardine to go ahead. Now Learmonth got cold feet and wished to reduce his investment. He asked Nisbet to take back

55 acres of land. Then another investor, John Paton, a builder, supported the venture. In February 1828, they asked Jardine to advertise for contractors to build the bridge. There was a difficulty. Previously, Learmonth had made an agreement with Nisbet that he would build "*a handsome and sufficient bridge over the Water of Leith*", to be designed and built by Gillespie Graham, architect.

So Jardine's design was submitted to Graham, who rejected them and produced his own. Jardine wrote to Telford saying that Graham was not an experienced engineer. Independent architects Burn and Playfair had seen and approved the plans. In April 1828 the Trustees consulted Thomas Telford and both Jardine's and Graham's plans were sent to him for vetting. Ten days later Learmonth muddied the waters further by writing to Telford, saying that he, Telford, had not been informed that if he was not happy with the designs, he should make one himself. At this point Telford withdrew from the project, and sent all the paperwork back to Edinburgh, not wishing to have anything more to do with it⁽¹⁾.

Telford was prevailed upon by all parties to change his mind. He produced his own design in May 1829, which was accepted. John Gibb and Son of Aberdeen were appointed contractors. Telford had used them before in the improvements on Aberdeen Harbour. Charles Ather-ton was appointed Inspector of Works. Learmonth provided the finance. And so, in July 1829, four years after the original proposal, work could begin.

The bridge as originally designed was 106 feet high, crossing the 450-foot ravine with three arches. Work started on the foundations, but a problem was immediately encountered. The rock on the south (city) side was crumbling and insecure. So the bridge had to be redesigned to be wider, with four arches, and the southern foundations could now be secured on solid rock.

The wooden scaffolding erected for the building of the bridge was itself a work of art. People came from long distances to see the bridge going up. There was a special skill involved in the centering of the arches. The piers and arches were hollow, and this allowed each block to be



Spectators come to view the building of Dean Bridge⁽²⁾
(Copyright: reproduced by permission of The Scotsman Newspapers)

bedded accurately as it could now be viewed from both sides. Hand-operated cranes were used to lift the stones into place. (The hole in each stone made for the claw grab can still be seen.) The hollow design was safer than a solid construction, as the extra weight could cause a bridge to fail. A side benefit was that the bridge was less expensive to build. Allowances had to be made when the scaffolding was removed, as the arches had to settle evenly.

The bridge was completed in December 1831, well before the planned date. But the carriageway and pavements had not yet been laid out. These works were finally completed on 8th May 1832, the road was surfaced the next day and the bridge handed over to its owners.

One story often repeated is that John Gibb, having completed the project early, put gates either side of the bridge and charged a penny a time to cross it. As it was the wonder of the time, he would indeed have made a pretty penny. This particular hare may have been started by a correspondent to the Scotsman of 10th September 1929, relating this story told by his father, an Aberdonian, who was 32 at the time.

The cost was estimated at £18,566, largely borne by Learmonth, who now was Lord Provost of Edinburgh. And there was no cost at all in human lives. The Fathers of the City of Edinburgh looked on with interest, but took no part as the city boundary ended at Randolph Cliff.

Sadly for Learmonth, economic conditions in the building industry turned very bad in the 1830s and 1840s. He did get some of his investment recompensed by the Cramond Trustees. But it was twenty years before the first buildings went up in Clarendon Crescent. The real winner was the City of Edinburgh. All roads and bridges in the now extended borders became City property after the passing of the Roads and Bridges Act 1878.

And they paid not a penny for it.

References: -

- 1) Skinner, B., Book of the Old Edinburgh Club, Volume XXX, 1959, pgs 76 - 78.*
- 2) Renwick, J., Evening News, 13th June 1970*

Winter precautions

Our local crime prevention officer has sent a timely warning on how to protect our property and belongings as the dark nights are now with us. Summarised below are a comprehensive set of precautions - please email secretary@deanvillage.org to receive the full details.

Your home: -

- If external lighting around your home has failed, contact the council or your factor.
- Trim hedges and trees to deny thieves hiding places
- Use pebbles rather than slabs in driveways, as they make more noise.
- Doors should be solidly built with mortice locks or other cylinder locks.
- Keep your doors locked even when at home, and do not leave your key in the lock.
- Make accessible windows secure. Opening windows should have key operated locks, and keys kept well out of reach. Sash and case windows may be secured with bolts.
- In apartments, do not let anyone in that you do not know. Never let your door lie open. Secure communal outside doors.

Your bicycle, motorbike or scooter: -

- A “Thatcham” or “Sold Secure” electronic immobiliser is recommended for motorbikes and scooters.
- If outside, bikes and scooters should be secured to railings etc.
- If inside, make sure your shed or garage is secure.
- Mark as many parts of your machine with the Vehicle Identification Number, ideally linked with a recognised database.
- Do not leave possessions, e.g. helmet, on your machine.

Your valuables: -

- Store valuable jewellery separately from everyday wear.
- Keep photographs, receipts and descriptions of expensive belongings
- Mark your belongings clearly and permanently.

Water, water, everywhere

In China, anyway. Glenburn Spring Water has become a major exporter to China, selling a product called Ganten Water. They have commissioned Freak Films to make a series of adverts which have gone down well with the Chinese public. Recently the cameras were once again rolling in Dean Village

There have been two previous filmings in Dean Village. The first was in February 2014, reported in DVN 164, where a vintage Rolls is pictured. This clip may be viewed on-line using the following link: - <https://vimeo.com/67550303>. The princess in a white gown leaves Edinburgh Castle in the Rolls, accompanied by riders on white horses. They drive up Victoria Street, and then arrive in Dean Village. Meanwhile an old man is seen walking up the steps by Hawthornbank, then up an Edinburgh Close, before arriving back in Dean, and settling down in front of Bell's Brae House with a bottle of Ganten Water. The princess comes across and takes it from him. That this goes down well in a communist is remarkable.

A second advert was shot in February 2014, but not in Edinburgh. This may be seen using the link: - <https://vimeo.com/117816329>. The princess is seen descending stairs (in Glasgow City Chambers), then walking through the vaults of Stirling Castle where she encounters the old man with a bottle of water. Then she is seen in a cave (Smoo Cave in Durness) crossing an illuminated bridge. A young man is kneeling by the side of a stream, from which a bottle of Ganten Water emerges. He gives it to the princess while they gaze into each other's eyes.

This was shown to an audience of one billion. The Chinese audience was so engaged that a newspaper competition was set up so that people could speculate about the origins and fate of the participants.

The second filming in Dean occurred last year in August, reported in DVN 172. Photos show a young girl and a tall man riding in a carriage drawn by white horses. Presumably this footage will be incorporated in the next advert.

The latest filming took place in various locations in Edinburgh,



arriving in Dean Village on the 28th and 29th September. Cars were banned from parking in the village centre, signs were removed, and sand was put down to cover up the yellow markings. Two actors were filmed in a coach drawn by two white horses, followed by six more white horses with riders. Unfortunately, on the Wednesday morning, rain intervened, causing a break in the filming.

That Ganten Water is well recognised in China was reinforced when watching the China Tennis Open in Shanghai, where Andy Murray was competing (and which he won). The Ganten logo was one of those featured around the tennis court.

Closure of Dean Parish Church

On the morning of Saturday, 19th November an organ recital was given by Dr. John Kitchen, Honorary and Organist of the University of Edinburgh. Close to 100 attended, and were rewarded by a varied and expertly played repertoire. The rousing finale was the Toccata from Symphony Number 5 by Charles-Marie Widor that tested the strength of the organ. The audience would not let the organist away without giving an encore. Sadly, the last service at Dean Parish Church was held the next morning. More than 100 attended, and at the end of the service there were refreshments in the church hall. A specially baked cake was donated by Cathleen Blacklaw and cut by Merle McIvor, a church member since 1943.

Dean Valley Regeneration Project

The objectives of Dean Valley Regeneration Ltd (DVRL) defined in the Articles of Association of 11th September 2015 are to: -

- improve and regenerate the length of the Water of Leith between Dean Village and Stockbridge and the surrounding Dean valley,
- rebuild and restore lost structures in the valley, including walkways, railings, bridges and listed buildings and
- provide relevant information, interpretation and such environmental or green facilities as may be appropriate or viable.

To achieve these objectives DVRL would seek to apply for a Heritage Lottery grant.

At the end of August, a meeting of the City of Edinburgh Council's Transport and Environment Committee recommended that the Council support DVRL in its application to secure funding for a feasibility study for the regeneration of this part of the Valley of the Water of Leith. A project liaison group should be formed to steer the study and survey work.

Many changes have occurred in DVRL in the last few months. The Chairman and Trustee Colin Mackay and Trustee Robert Barnham have both resigned. This left Kristina Taylor as the only Trustee. At committee meetings held in August and September it was decided to bring the project to an orderly conclusion. The company could only be run with a minimum of three Trustees, and therefore would become dormant.

At subsequent committee meetings of DVRL in October and November two new Trustees were appointed - Philip Tracy and Julie Chapman Purchas. (Your Secretary was invited to become a Trustee but declined because of a possible later conflict of interests). As a result the work of DVRL can now continue. There were changes to the conduct of business. The committee would become the General Purposes Committee. Only the Trustees would have a vote. Sufficient funds were available to carry out the first part of feasibility study which concentrated solely on Miller Row. Two quotes had been received to carry out this feasibility study. These would be assessed by Trustee Philip Tracy assisted by Alison Morris of Edinburgh World Heritage Trust using the scoring methodology of EWHT. The tender could then be awarded by DVRL if the Trustees approved.

The results of the study would then be referred to the project liaison commit-

tee, which would decide on the next steps in the process. Funds would need to be raised if it was decided to proceed with the second part of the feasibility study, which would encompass the whole of the Valley of the Water of Leith between Stockbridge and the metal footbridge in Dean Village.

DVRL now have a comprehensive website: - deanvalley.org.uk. The original Dean Valley Conservation statement may be accessed, along with the other plans and studies that have been completed.

Give your own views

DVRL wish to conduct scoping studies in order that they may take into consideration as many views of residents as possible. A questionnaire has been included with this issue of the Dean Village News

If you wish to make your views known, please complete the form and return it to the Secretary, Dean Village Association, 22, Damside, Dean Village, Edinburgh EH4 3BB, who will pass them on to DVRL.

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My Friends in the Cemetery XXVII by David Perry

The Lighthouse Stevensons

This Stevenson family made an immense contribution towards preventing seamen and voyagers from perishing on the rocky coasts of Scotland. Four generations of the family built lighthouses and four members of the family now rest in Dean Cemetery

Before 1800, warnings around the Scottish coasts consisted of bonfires, or high towers on which candles were placed. These were soon extinguished in bad weather. In 1799, seventy vessels were lost in the Firth of Tay.

In Edinburgh Thomas Smith made a living from making oil lamps and designing street lighting in the expanding New Town. He devised a system of reflectors to concentrate the light beam and suggested that this method could be used in lighthouses. He was sent to study English lighthouses, and was then made first engineer to the Northern Lighthouse Trust. In 1786 he was commissioned to build four lighthouses, two on the mainland (Kinneard Head by Fraserburgh and Mull of Kintyre) and two on islands (Harris and North Ronaldsay). Not being an architect or a builder, he had to improvise. He made the simplest, crudest lights possible, but they worked.

Thomas Smith married Jane Stevenson (née Lillee). Jane's first husband, Alan Stevenson, had died at the age of 22, due to illness in the Caribbean. Their son Robert was six years old when Jane married again. In the 1790s Robert studied engineering at Glasgow University. Thomas then took his step-son into his business. Robert gained practical experience in his father's workshop, and accompanied him on his lighthouse building duties. By 1800 he had become so proficient that Thomas handed over the business to him and virtually retired. Between 1793 and 1806 five more lighthouses were built around the coast. Robert became Commissioner on the Board of Northern Lights. He experimented with different types of oil lamp and oil until he found the best combination. With more and more lighthouses being built, it was necessary to differentiate between them. Robert devised a clockwork mechanism that rotated the light, causing it to flash.

The most important project at this time was to place a lighthouse on the Bell Rock, a reef twelve miles from Arbroath that threatened the entrance to the Tay and Forth firths. Each winter, six or more ships foundered there. John Rennie was the first choice of architect, but Robert's was the design finally accepted. In 1807, now aged 36, he started work. The workers had to wait for low tides and good weather. The magnificent structure took four years to complete. Robert's reputation was now secure.

Robert had three sons, Alan, David and Thomas. Alan was a gifted classical scholar but went into engineering, and followed his father as Commissioner. His greatest work was the Skerryvore lighthouse on rocks west of Tiree. Brother David, eight years younger, took over on Alan's retirement. His best work was the light on Muckle Flugga. Thomas, the youngest by three years, and the father of Robert Louis Stevenson, built 27 on-shore and 25 off-shore lighthouses. The most well-known is the light on Dubh Artach (Black Isle), on the Isle of Erraid off Mull. (Later, RLS stayed there with Sam Bough. Sam painted and RLS wrote "Kidnapped".) Thomas took the scientist's optical developments further, even taking up the latest tool of electricity. He worked closely with David, and together developed the construction and operation of their lighthouses

David had two sons, David and Charles. Since most of the lighthouses needed had been constructed by the elder generation, all that was now needed was up-grading and modernisation. The Stevenson lights around the coast of Scotland have now been protecting ships and lives for two centuries. Listening to the Shipping Forecasts today is to appreciate their legacy.

The memorial stone of the two Davids may be found towards the western end against the northern wall of the old part of the cemetery. The younger David had a son, also David. He and his uncle Charles are buried near Hector's monument in the far southeast corner of the cemetery.

Much of information quoted here was gained from "The Lighthouse Stevensons" by Bella Bathurst (Harper Collins *Publishers 1999*).

Beware - scammers about

It will happen like this. You will receive a phone call from a man with a friendly, educated voice informing you that he is an inspector appointed by your bank. He has been asked to track down irregularities by some members of staff, who are helping themselves to money from customer's accounts. He suspects that your account may be one of those affected. Naturally you are concerned, and, being an honest and helpful citizen, you give the inspector the details that he requires. When you later check your account you find that money has indeed been removed, not by a member of staff, but by the bogus bank inspector. This has happened to at least one person in Dean Village.

If you get such a call, or perhaps an e-mail, do not give your bank account details. Reply politely, and put the phone down. The problem here is that there might indeed be an irregularity on your account. To discover the truth, phone your bank, but NOT on the phone that was used to receive your original call. Use your cell phone, or phone from a friend's house. This is because the scammer will not put the phone down at his end, thus keeping the line open. So if you "phone" back, he will have someone else speak to you and tell you that this is genuine. If you do find that it is an attempted scam, phone the police. Then if the scammer phones again, maybe he can be tracked down.

Future events in Dean Village

Walks describing the history of Dean Village will take place on the following dates: - Thursday 8th June, Tuesday 27th June and Thursday 20th July. These will be at 7.15 in the evening, starting from Kirkbrae House at the top of Bell's Brae.

Our cemetery walks will be on Sundays 18th June, 9th July and 30th July. Meet at the cemetery gates at the top of Dean Path at 2.30 p.m.

Dean Village Association plans to open St. Bernard's Well from midday till 3p.m. to visitors on the first Sundays of each month starting in April, and the Sundays of the Edinburgh Festival in August. Entry free.



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

Winter Nature Notes by Barbara Mackay

Our British Summer has passed. However we did enjoy a pleasant Indian one and, into November, we are still autumnal. The crunchy leaves underfoot have only recently turned squelchy and there is still a fine colour display from the few leaves left on trees. It was a dry autumn. Looking at the Water of Leith gently moving by, it is not more than a trickle of clear water lapping over glistening riverbed stones. The duck population has gone, but it was good to see Mrs. Goosander appear with one of her brood, a large “little ‘un” who dived straight in and under, feet flapping furiously. I hope he was rewarded with a tasty snack. The number and variety of the birds coming to our small garden has been disappointing, countable on my fingers and toes.

A woodpecker was heard for a short time. The Greater and the Lesser “peckers” use a drumming beat whilst the Greens give out a sort of laughing cry. Another colourful bird on a short visit was the Goldfinch with its striking array of gold, black and white. It has a special beak for collecting thistle-down, its favourite food.

How important beaks are to all our birds. The Seagull’s beak, however, is made for damage. They don’t enjoy a good press. Studies have revealed that gulls know which streets and parts of streets have the best pickings and have adapted their scavenging and diet to our throwaways. They particularly enjoy chicken wings, pork ribs and, of course, chips. Such birds adapt very well to an urban environment as we have mentioned before about our “GSGs” (*Gorgie Street Gang - Ed*). The ever-present pigeon is a welcome visitor, quiet and non-threatening. Perhaps next year will see the return of more of our usual garden visitors.

Edinburgh Orchestra Ensemble

The Edinburgh Orchestra Ensemble, founded in 2009, is dedicated to making music of the highest possible standard. If you are a musician and would like to join us we invite you to attend rehearsals which take place on Monday evenings between 7.30 and 9.45pm at the beautiful Society of Musicians building at 3, Belford Road. These are not auditions, but are a means of determining whether you would like to join us,

Our website is edinburghensemble.org, and you may contact us by e-mail by ContactUs@edinburghensemble.org

It's a *Braw* Café

Meg wishes all Dean villagers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Thank you once again for your support

Dates for Christmas orders are as follows: -

Last orders will be taken on the 18th of December.

These should be picked up before Braw closes at 15.00hrs. on the 23rd of December. (Of course, anyone with mobility issues will have their orders delivered free of charge.)

As usual, Braw will close for two weeks at Christmas, with a special opening on the first day of 2017, from 11.00 till 14.00hrs. to serve hangover cures.

We at Braw look forward to seeing you

Meg xxx

Dean Village News

This issue of the Dean Village News has been delivered only to members of the Association. If you have enjoyed reading this issue, or found it useful or helpful in any way, you can help by recommending joining the Dean Village Association to others and thus assist in looking after our village. 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. Membership Secretary - Caroline Gerard.

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: treasurer@deanvillage.org

Membership Secretary: Caroline Gerard

e-mail:- membership@deanvillage.org

Committee members: Charlie Hughes, Conrad Hughes,
Pat Sinclair, David Watt

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

14th March 2017

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

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