



Dean Village News

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www.deanvillage.org

Belford House/Douglas House

AMA New Town Ltd. have come up with some new proposals regarding the demolition of these offices followed by re-development of the site for residential and office use. They hosted a drop-in consultation event on Wednesday, 28th August at the Conan Doyle Centre in Palmerston Place. They invited interested parties to give their views on the proposals prior to their renewed planning application to the City of Edinburgh Council.

The plan exhibited was a block diagram of the proposed development. The flats were aligned along Belford Road, and town houses would be built down Sunbury Mews. The eastern end of the building was cut back to allow a view of the turreted end house at the junction of Sunbury Mews and Belford Mews. But there was no concession as to the retention of the Douglas House façade. The Reporter had said that although this house was not listed, it had sufficient merit to be retained unless the developers could show that it was not economically viable so to do.

The consensus seemed to be that the proposed plan was significantly superior to that previously submitted to the planning committee. However there was room for improvement. Those residents who were most affected by the development still wished the Douglas House façade to be retained.

The design allowed for a more varied frontage, and a roofline that varied in height along its length. There were two alleyways that led from Belford Road through the flats into gardens behind. Car-parking would be underneath the flats as at Hawthornbank.

However, the detailed plan still has to be finalised. Until that can be seen no knowledgeable judgement can be made. The developers expect their plan to go before the planning committee before the end of the year.

No further information was available at the time of publication. Interested parties should go to the website of the City of Edinburgh and access the planning section where the application should eventually appear. They may then submit their objections to the planning committee.

Craigeith Probus Club

What is a Probus club about? The name is derived from professional retired businessmen. It is an internationally recognised concept of a club for retired and semi-retired businessmen and women. The numbers are limited in any one group so those members have the chance to get to know each other. It is non-religious and non-political and the common denominator is that we are all retired from the work scene. There are a number of groups in the area.

Craigeith is a gentleman's Probus and we meet on Wednesday mornings on the first and third Wednesdays of the month from October till April at the Blackhall Bowling Club when we hear a talk on a variety of interesting subjects. We also have a number of trips and an annual lunch.

At the moment we have a few vacancies and would welcome new members. So if you are retired and would like to enjoy the camaraderie that goes with links with the local community please get in touch. Or, perhaps you just want to avoid the cabin fever that can be induced by an Edinburgh winter, then the answer is to come along for a coffee and listen to a stimulating talk on a Wednesday morning once a fortnight over the winter months.

The annual subscription is £20.00 and there are more details on the web site www.craigeithprobus.co.uk or get in touch with the secretary at 334 3832.



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My Friends in the Cemetery XVIII by David Perry

The Stevensons

James Stevenson (1786 - 1866) was born in Paisley. He was a successful businessman, firstly as a merchant in Glasgow and later becoming a partner in Jarrow Chemical Company in South Shields. He and his wife, Jane Stewart Shannan, managed to produce an extremely large number of children. Following his retirement in 1854 the family moved to Edinburgh and after their mother's death settled in a large house at 13 Randolph Crescent in 1859. When James passed away four of the sisters, Jane (1828 - 1904), Elisa (1829 - 1904), Louisa (1835 - 1908) and Flora (1839 - 1905) lived the rest of their lives in this house.

Jane kept the family together and looked after the house. Eliza was an early campaigner for women's rights. But Louisa and Flora were the sisters who made the biggest impact on Edinburgh society.

Louisa was a member of the Edinburgh Association for the University Education of Women and, in 1868, with Flora, attended the first course of lectures specifically for women given by Professor Masson. Louisa gave evidence to a Commission on University Education which led to a change in legislation allowing Scottish Universities to be open to women students from 1892. Masson Hall, a women's hall of residence opened in 1897 with Louisa as honorary secretary.

Louisa also co-founded the Edinburgh School of Cookery, a fore-runner of Queen Margaret University. She was a poor law guardian in the city paying particular attention to the standard of nursing in the poorhouse. She assisted in managing the Institute for District Nurses for nurses that were needed within the British Empire and was President of the Society for State Registration of Trained Nurses. The British Journal of Nursing praised her genial courtesy, indomitable perseverance and thorough grasp of her subject.

Flora Stevenson was a social reformer with an interest in education for poor and neglected children, and in education for girls. In 1872 an Act of Parliament meant that women could serve on school boards for the first time. She served on the School Board of Edinburgh for 32 years and was Chairman from 1900 till her death.

She was particularly interested in the education of the poorest children and also the delinquent ones. She devised a scheme which offered food and clothing in exchange for a commitment to attend school. She believed in the value of Industrial Schools for juvenile delinquents and in the reformation of inebriates.

She strongly supported the education of girls, wishing them to attend lessons like the boys instead of spending time sewing. Together with sister Louisa she promoted the Edinburgh School of Cookery. She supported women's suffrage and enforced school attendance. In 1899 a new school in Comely Bank was named after her, now a primary school. She was a governor of George Heriot's School and a burgess of Edinburgh. She died in September 1905 and the mourners who lined the streets at her funeral including several thousand schoolchildren.

Both sisters received Honorary LLDs from Edinburgh University, Flora in 1903 and Louisa in 1906. Alexander Read painted Flora's portrait in 1904, with money raised by public subscription.

Among their many siblings was brother John James (JJ) Stevenson (1831 - 1908) who was an architect building mainly churches in Scotland and domestic or educational buildings in England. He wrote books on town planning and historical architecture. Also James Cochrane Stevenson (1825 - 1905) who devoted his working life to public works like sanitation and road building. He became an MP for South Shields in 1868 for 27 years.

Also mentioned on an epitaph adjacent to the four sisters were mentioned their aunts Isabella and Betsy Shannon. Particularly touching is the mention of Ann Pollock, their nurse in childhood and later family friend, who lived with them for most of her life until she passed away in April 1892, aged 94 years.

The house at 13 Randolph Crescent is now the French Institute, which teaches French, next to the French Consulate at number 12.

The Water of Leith Walkway

The Water of Leith walkway stretches from the outskirts of Balerno down to the Custom House by The Shore at Leith, a distance a little over 12½ miles. In the last issue of the Dean Village News the walk from Juniper Green to Slateford was described. If doing the walk in sections, take the 44 bus to Slateford and cross the road to where the Water of Leith Visitors' Centre is situated.

Stage 3: - Slateford to Dean Village.

Before starting your walk take the time to go into the Visitors' Centre. You will find plenty of information about the Water of Leith, its wildlife and vegetation. There are also interactive exhibits and a DVD in which our past chairman, sadly now deceased, Lawrence Walker, describes life as a miller. There is a cafe, so perhaps have a cup of something before starting off.

A short walk brings you to the railway bridge spanning the river. There are steps up the side, 87 in all (an unlucky number for Australians, being 13 less than a century) to the Forth and Clyde canal. To the west the canal goes over the aqueduct parallel to the railway, which crosses the river and leads to Ratho and beyond. To the east the canal wends its way to the city centre, ending near Tollcross. More opportunities for other long walks.

Continue along the walkway through a pleasant wooded area. You come to Saughton cemetery, so there is the river to your left and gravestones to your right. At the end of the graveyard are the allotments, mostly well tended. If you come along here in the summer you may be able to try some raspberries from fronds that protrude through the wire fence. The walkway goes through two right angles, and across the river is Saughton prison. At the end of the allotments is an electricity substation, complete with pylon, and a bridge takes you across the river.

The river is now on your right and an industrial area of units on your left. Soon you come to the main Gorgie Road the A71. Cross with care!

Continue along the walkway, coming out at Ford's Road. Now you enter Saughton Park and are faced with choices. You can go straight on, quicker, but less interesting. Better to keep to the river and keep right through the car park. You pass the entrance to Saughton Winter Gardens on your left. Now you come to a gently sloping waterfall, with the water rippling over the stone base.

Follow the river by not exiting the park at the main road but follow the river to the left. You now meet up with those who either visited the gardens or went straight on. The gardens are well worth a visit - they are open noon till 3pm on Saturdays and Sundays, 10 till 4 on Mondays and 10 till 3.30 the rest of the week.

Now cross Balgreen Road, and follow the river, firstly with the primary school and then the Bowling Club on your left. Now you come to a bit of a halt, because at the moment works on the new bridge which will take the trams is still in progress. This will be resolved in the New Year when the path will reopen and allow you to go straight on to the Murrayfield area.

The diversion is as follows. Go over the river on the bridge to your right, skirt round the flats taking two left turns and rejoin the walkway. An extra walk of 5 minutes instead of a simple walk under the bridge. However, this is only a temporary inconvenience.

Continue along the walkway, past the ice rink, and emerge at Roseburn. Cross the road and follow the brown walkway signs. A short walk brings you to the old rail bridge, which is now a cycle and walkway from Gorgie/Dalry to points north: Davidson's Mains, Silverknowes, Cramond and Leith. A few more minutes brings you to the back entrance of the Modern Art Galley. You might like to cross the river and take a break there, either to have lunch or browse through the exhibits.

Back on the walkway is the area known as the Haugh. One of the Ghormley men was once placed here, now downed by the high flow of the river when in spate, along with the others. On the wall beside the river are several memorial stones to commemorate those lost to AIDS and HIV. There is also one of the occasional Water of Leith Walkway brass rubbing inserts. Nearby is Lawrence Walker's memorial bench, placed there as once he worked in Bells' Mills across the water.

OK, now we are on familiar territory. Pass by the steps that once led to Donaldson's School, past the steps to Haymarket with the Tennis Club across the river. Cross the river and go past the hotel which is now the Britannia, and under Belford Bridge.

But once again we are halted. The landslip further long the path has still not been stabilised and the barriers are up. The Council forbids walking along the path until there is no danger of a further landslip. So either go up the steps to Belford Bridge, through grounds of the Dean Gallery, and either through the cemetery, or, if too spooky for you, along Ravelston Crescent and down Dean Path. Or go across the river into the Sunbury area, up by Café Braw (pausing for refreshment) and back down to the river. But do take time to go back up the river and appreciate the force of the water as it goes over the upper weir.

Proceed to the centre of the village to complete this section of the walk. Here is the ochre-rendered Great Granary built in 1675, West Mills built in 1805 to feed the soldiers during the Napoleonic wars, the village school of 1875 with its roundel of Queen Margaret, and of course, John Ritchie Findlay's Well Court of 1884.

Found - one goothe

In the Village News of Summer 2009 we reported that the “goothe”, once an inhabitant of the Water of Leith by St. Bernard’s Well, had disappeared. It had been knocked off its perch by the debris coming down the river when in flood (which also did for the Ghormley Men).

The goothe has now taken up residence in Belgrave Crescent Gardens, adjacent to the river, by the lower weir. It is safely on land, securely housed on a large stone plinth. The bird was called a “goothe” by a little girl passing by one day, but the sculptor assures us that it is a duck.



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Tel: 0131-557-0577 - Fax: 0131-557-5759

Email: mark.lazarowicz.mp@parliament.uk

The Water of Leith Trust's 25th AGM

The Water of Leith Conservation Trust was started as registered charity number SC000015 in 1988. Their mission is to conserve and advance the Water of Leith as a haven for wildlife and an educational and recreational resource for all. A full report on their 25th year may be found on-line at www.waterofleith.org.uk.

Highlights were the launching of "The Scottish National Trail" from the Borders to Cape Wrath, aided by Alec Salmond and Cameron McNeish. A great innovation was the creation of the Audio Trail, where walkers with smartphones or MP3 technology can listen to recorded tracks describing the heritage and wildlife at 20 spots, marked by plaques, along the river. These tracks may also be accessed on-line.

After the meeting, Alison Baker of the Forth River Trust gave a talk on invasive species in the district. Of particular interest to residents along the river would be the control of the Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed. The former can be dug out by digging 15 centimetres below ground level either to sever the taproot, or to dig out the whole plant. There is no alternative but chemical treatment for Japanese Knotweed: 10/1 solution of glyphosate injected into the stem of the plant by a special applicator. Probably best done by a professional. More information on these and other invasive species may be obtained on-line at www.fishforth.co.uk.

Dean Village Matters

At the Annual General Meeting in April this year the untidy state of Dean Village was discussed. In June the Secretary, David Perry, and long-term resident, Barbara Mackay, walked through the village with councillors Lesley Hinds, Gavin Barrie and Nigel Bagshaw. Various sites within the village in need of attention were examined.

The Secretary later attended a meeting of the Inverleith Neighbourhood Partnership on 13th August. This was a public meeting where residents of the area can meet representatives of the Council to raise issues relevant to their area. The Partnership has funds available which can be allocated to appropriate environmental projects and community events.

The main issue to emerge from both these events was one of ownership. The Council is responsible only for those areas that are clearly within its ownership. It has no responsibility for problems arising from land in private ownership. Thus roads and pavements are within the Council's remit. But areas of land, such as one adjacent to the electricity sub-station, and another in which four silver birch trees are growing, both in upper Damside, are not owned by the Council.

Thanks to the efforts of our councillors, in particular Lesley Hinds, there have been distinct changes for the better up to the time of publication.

1) Strangely, Convening Court, the history of which stretches back to the 17th century, does not appear to be owned by the Council. The steps are steep and are dangerous in winter when they become wet, more so when icy. A job number was allocated to putting a handrail down the steps in 2007, but no action had occurred. But, now, incredibly, a handrail has been installed running down the centre of the steps. The path now turns and ends in Upper Damside, where there was a rocky step stone. This has been cemented firmly back in place.

2) Dean Village Association had raised at an Inverleith Partnership meeting the issue of the state of the surfaces of Dean Path and Bell's

Brae due to the replacing of sets with patches of tarmac when utilities do repair work. The answer given was that putting the setts back would be very expensive, and was well down on the list of priorities compared to other areas. However, due to our representations to our councillors and their influence, the tarmac was removed and the setts restored in early November in the village centre.

3) Another long-term contentious issue was the unsightly hoarding “protecting” the empty site at 3/4 Belford road. Following representations by our councillors and by the Edinburgh City Property Office, Caledonian Scottish Developments Ltd has taken limited action. The hoarding has been patched up and whitewashed. Not wonderful, but better. Some artistic graffiti would be actually welcomed.

4) BT has stabilised the telephone box outside West Mills, and is awaiting a part to fully restore it.

5) The gate at the bottom of the slope from Damside to the Water of Leith had been welded back in place.

6) The Old School Playground development project, now referred to as Damside Park, has been placed under the management of Edinburgh and Lothian Greenspace Trust, which is getting ready to put the project up for tender. A meeting between Dean Village Association committee members and other interested parties will take place on December 10th.

7) The seat outside Keppie’s in Bell’s Brae has been repaired

There are still some problem areas which are privately owned. It is incumbent on residents to look after the areas which are their responsibility. However the problem often is that the land in question is jointly owned by many residents of flats. And some residents are renting their flats from absentee landlords. The committee is considering whether to hold a public meeting after the April AGM to discuss this problem.

Belgrave Crescent Gardens Open Day

Belgrave Crescent Gardens were opened to visitors on the afternoon of Saturday, 31st August. A table sale had been organised to raise funds so that some new equipment that was needed could be purchased.

There were around 20 tables situated in the upper area of the gardens. A wide assortment of items were on show: clothing, jewelry, cards, books and a tombola stall. There was a tea tent, face painting and story telling for the children. The event was well attended.

Dean Village Association took a table and had items, some free, some for sale for just £1, concerning the village, St. Bernard's Well and the Water of Leith. Unfortunately, although the weather was fine, it was a little windy. So we had to anchor down our exhibits with some stones found in the gardens.

Residents of the village were invited to stay behind for a small reception at the Dean Village table after the main event had concluded at 5pm. Sadly very few took up this offer. However we are not discouraged. We hope to have a social gathering by the river just behind West Mills, where the Goothe, sorry, the duck, lives, perhaps in the spring of next year. Come and meet your fellow residents then.

QUIET PLEASE

In the village songs of birds, hoots of owls,
But then, a discordant note, motorbike growls.
It's " Motorbike Monty " ! What a din he makes,
When he revs and roars, Damside wakes and shakes.

Some claim it's a case of " Boys will be boys ",
Most of us say " Please spare us that noise ".
If only he'd learn to drive off quietly,
We'd cheer his safe return home nightly.

ANON

Filming in Dean Village

Towards the end of August a Japanese television company - NHK Japan - came to Edinburgh to film an episode for their series "A City Walk". This programme has been running in Japan for several years, bringing the cities of the world to the attention of the Japanese audience. The main aim of the series is to walk through the city, concentrate on places of interest which are not necessarily attractive to tourists, in particular where the citizens live and work. Two places that they wished to include in their documentary were St. Bernard's Well and Well Court.

Sunday 29th September was a Doors Open Day at St. Bernard's Well, and there were plenty of visitors. At 4pm the camera team arrived consisting of the production co-ordinator Yasuhiro Kodama, the film director Ms Satsuki Honda, a cameraman with a Steadicam and sound recordists. Firstly they filmed the exterior and then they came into the Well and conducted interviews with some visitors. They were fascinated as a young girl operated the hand pump so that the spring water came gushing out. They wanted to know the history of the Well, about the purity of the water and the availability of the Well water to the general public.

The following Saturday they came back to film at Well Court. Resident Patrick Joyce acted as host. The Director conducted interviews with some of the residents in order to establish Well Court's history. And so they learned that John Ritchie Findlay, proprietor of "The Scotsman", had financed the building of the flats for the workers of Dean Village in 1884. Well Court was regarded as an early example of social housing. The team were fascinated by the washing lines and filmed washing being put out and collected. They filmed the buildings from several angles and the gardens overlooking the Water of Leith.

The programme is scheduled to be shown in Japan early next year. We are hoping to receive a DVD of the programme in order to see how we are portrayed, assuming, of course, that we understand Japanese.

Winter Nature Notes by Barbara Mackay

It is much quieter in Dean Village in the run up to Christmas. We have enjoyed a superb warm and green summer, full of life, birdsong and the soothing gurgle of the Water of Leith, followed by a glorious autumn. The trees have excelled themselves! Thick, heavy foliage with, great news, even the crack willows seem to have found a suitable bedding down place and have started to regenerate. This, the wise men say, is due to that compound we all hear about, carbon dioxide, (CO₂). Plants take it in from the atmosphere and turn it into food. It has long been thought that the greater the presence of CO₂ the greater the growth of plants. After all it is pumped into greenhouses to give us flowers, fruit and perfectly formed vegetables for designer cuisine. Carbon dioxide levels reached an all time high this summer, the previous comparably high reading being 3 to 5 million years ago.

Life is indeed quieter without the gulls, the birds we love to hate. We nicknamed them "The Gorgie Road Gang ". A sentinel gull flies over Palmerston Place Church, continues down Douglas Gardens, spots BPBs (black plastic bags) in Dean Village and summons his troops from his perch on the chimney pots of Well Court. Loud and clear he "cauks" for his army. Down they come from Gorgie. Curry, chinese, left over rice, mouldy bread, you name it and it will be there. After their sumptuous meal they depart, sleep for a while then begin to nest on our roofs causing more problems. It is claimed that they do not like the colour red, as postmen with their collection bags in London may testify.

Quieter, too, is life on the river and around the bird table. An older heron has been seen along the Water with a much younger one, the elder treading so elegantly from stone to stone with arched neck looking for his supper. I look on with trepidation in case he falls; there is no hip replacement service for herons. A pair of mergansers also called but they did not stay long; perhaps the perfect Christmas guests.

Have a peaceful and happy Christmas and best wishes for 2014.

Dean Village Association

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Dean Village News

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the News is

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

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