

Dean Village News

Issue 163 Winter 2012

www.deanvillage.org

2012 - Let it go

The Dean Village and Stockbridge areas have been particularly affected by the terrible weather experienced this year. It has been very windy and wet, wet, wet. There was extensive flooding in the Colonies where the high levels of the Water of Leith penetrated the flood defences. In the Dean Cemetery trees were blown down, damaging gravestones. In several areas there was a domino effect, so that one stone fell against the next and so on (See page 13). This will lead to great expense for the Dean Cemetery Trust to employ stone masons to repair the damage.

Between Belford Bridge and the Haugh several trees were blown down in the summer gales. But the worst event that time was the landslip just to the west of the Dean Bank steps. This has undermined the patio built at the top of the hill so that future slips could occur. The authorities have cordoned off the area from there to the footbridge into Sunbury Place. But determined walkers climb over the barriers rather than take the diversions. The council wishes to emphasise the dangers involved in ignoring the warnings.

So, 2012, we shall be glad to see the back of you. Let us hope that the climate changes that caused these disasters will not persist next year.

Douglas House/Belford House

The Chairman and Secretary of the Dean Village Association attended a meeting towards the end of August with representatives of AMA, the prospective developers of Douglas and Belford houses. The open display of possible solutions that had been held in the Travelodge on 26th June had resulted in many requests for the façade of Douglas House to be preserved in some way. However the developers were quite clear that the most effective proposal was the complete demolition of the two houses followed by a tasteful rebuild of premium apartments.

We appreciated the probability that the façade of Douglas House might not be preserved, but requested that the future plans should reflect the Edwardian nature of the building. We also requested that the highest tower in the building be not at the east end overlooking Sunbury and Belford Mews, but perhaps be located in the centre. We also reminded the developers that the Reporter had endorsed the view that the building line be not along Belford Road. There should be an angle back so that the view from the corner of Belford road across to Dean Bridge will be preserved.

The meeting concluded with the developers undertaking to have a second open viewing of possible plans at the Travelodge Hotel within the next six weeks. However, no such viewing has occurred and no further communications have been received from AMA.

Perhaps the plans have been delayed. Or perhaps the developers are having second thoughts about developing these houses. Certainly the delays are costing them a lot of money, and they may well be deterred by the level of opposition given by the local residents.

So there is a possibility that they will sell the site on to other developers. Or the houses may remain as they are. The problem is that Douglas House does need renovation. We need a white knight to ride in to save it.

Arthur's Seat by David Perry

Towards the end of September your editor was standing, no sitting, on Arthur's Seat. Nothing very strange about that, you may think. Except that this Arthur's Seat was the highest point of the Mornington Peninsula, some 40 miles from what is now Melbourne.

Captain Matthew Flinders was exploring Philip Bay in the early months of 1802 and made an ascent of the highest point there (305 meters). He glowingly recorded in the log the magnificent view of this bay. On board ship was Lt. John Murray who named this "mountain". A notice board says "Arthur's Seat was named after a mountain near Edinburgh, Scotland by Lt. John Murray during a first exploration of Port Philip Bay in 1802". A photo helpfully shows the original Edinburgh seat taken at such an angle as to make it look truly mountainous.

A nearby cairn marks the point of Flinder's ascent. The precise spot was later verified by Admiral John Franklin in 1844. Those who have been on our cemetery walk would be acquainted with Franklin (DVN 156 Spring 2010). In 1845 he led the ill-fated expedition to find the North-West passage during which he died. Anstruther, a cemetery resident, was the doctor on a ship funded by Jane Franklin to find her husband. Franklin's second-in-command Lt. John Irving is also commemorated in the cemetery.

There is actually a seat here, provided by the Arthur's Seat Scenic Chairlift Pty Ltd. A plaque reads "*ARTHUR'S SEAT THE THIRD. This chair "Arthurs Seat" was positioned on December 1st 1989 in an effort to maintain tradition its two predecessors both lost in history, also accommodated many important backsides. Please be seated*".

Originally this region was occupied by the Boonerwung aborigines, stretching back over 40,000 years. The area was then called Wonga, after the pigeons that roosted there. Such was the fertility and abundance in this place, the aborigines



**The editor's grand-daughter
by Arthurs Seat**

only had to forage for food for four hours each day. They could then spend the rest of the day in social interaction. Now houses stretch for as far as the eye can see.

Visitors are invited to take various walks around the area. It might be possible to see Lewin's Rail, the Powerful Owl, the Southern Brown Bandicoot, Koala, Tree Goanna, the Southern Emu-Wren and the Wedge-Tailed Eagle.

I saw no Koala, and I doubt whether I would recognise a bandicoot if it bit me on the leg, which it might do, as I believe it is a sort of mouse.

This was not the only local reference that I came across. In Balla-arat, a gold mining town, I saw Learmonth Avenue. Perhaps a relative of John Learmonth, Provost of Edinburgh who promoted the building of Dean Bridge in 1830, went out to try his luck in the gold rush of 1850 and made his fortune. A fascinating thought.

Wanted — Social Secretary.

The committee of the Dean Village Association are all too aware that we do not have many, if any, social events where like-minded members can get together and exchange ideas. We have our AGM and the Water of Leith clean-up in April and nothing else. We do circulate our Dean Village News to members in July and December and to all Dean Village residents in March. This keeps you informed of the committee's activities on various issues that concern Dean Village over the year.

We have in the past attempted to run an annual dinner, but the cost seemed to put people off. We are considering a barbecue in the summer of 2013, but this sort of event is always under threat from our uncertain weather.

If anyone has any ideas of events that they think would interest our members, please pass them on to the Secretary, David Perry at 22 Damside or by e-mail to dav12per@btinternet.com. These could then be discussed at the AGM in April.

Ideally we would like someone to volunteer to be social secretary, with the sole responsibility of organising one or two events during the year.

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My Friends in the Cemetery XV by David Perry James and Patrick Nasmyth

The magnificent monument to the brothers James and Patrick Nasmyth may be seen through the lower, closed, gate of the cemetery.

They were the sons of Alexander Nasmyth (1758 - 1840), painter and architect, best known locally for the design of St. Bernard's Well, based on the Temple of the Sybil at Tivoli, seen during his grand tour of Italy. Alexander is buried in St. Cuthbert's Churchyard.

Patrick (1787 - 1831) was the eldest son and soon developed an interest in painting, encouraged by his father. He was forced to paint using only his left hand following an accident incurred in his teenage years. His main works feature the landscape of his native Scotland, which he continued to paint even after moving to London in 1810. Sadly he died, possibly of pneumonia, after painting outdoor scenes.

James (1808 - 1890) was encouraged by his father to work with all types of materials in their workshop. As a teenager he spent time in his friend's father's foundry and learned to work with metals. From 1821 to 1826 he attended the Edinburgh School of Arts (now Heriot-Watt University). He wished to become a mechanical engineer. In 1828 he made a steam engine capable of completing a mile carrying eight passengers.

At the age of 23 he set up business on his own in Manchester. He formed a partnership with Holbrook Gaskell and in 1836 they opened the Bridgewater Foundry adjacent to the recently constructed Liverpool and Manchester Railway. They produced a wide range of tools ordered by the new railway companies for the production of their locomotives. In particular the Great Western Railway wanted them to provide tools of a greater size and power for their big ship the SS Great Britain. This led to the design and patenting of the steam hammer in 1842.

The advantage of Nasmyth's hammer was that the force of each blow could be controlled by the operator. Thus it could break an egg in a wine glass without breaking the glass, and then follow with a full force blow which shook the entire building. Soon Nasmyth's hammers were to be found in all large workshops all over the country. The principle of the hammer was then used in the pile driver, used in large constructions all over the world.

In 1856 James retired at the age of 48. He had developed a wide range of standardised machine tools, a hydraulic press, key-cutting tools and milling machines. He settled in Kent and, being interested in astronomy, built his own 20-inch reflecting telescope. In recognition of his invaluable contributions to the discipline of mechanical engineering, the department's building at Heriot-Watt University is called the James Nasmyth building.

The Nasmyth monument shows on Patrick's side a shield showing broken traditional hammers and the motto "through war, not skill" and on James's side the steam hammer and the motto "through skill, not war".



Goodbye - Willow Trees

In a garden in Hawthornbank Lane there were two mature willow trees on the river bank overlooking the Water of Leith. Over the last year or so the trees had been getting in worse and worse shape, with many dead branches (some of which had already blown off in high winds). The owners were advised by an arboriculturalist that the trees would have been completely dead within a year, and were already dangerous due to their large dead limbs. Unfortunately there was no apparent cause for the poor health of the trees, though it may be connected with the water levels around the base of the trees during the heavy floods over the last few years. The wisest course was to have the trees felled in order to avoid any damage or injury to people or houses that might have been caused by parts of the trees (or the whole of the trees!) blowing over in high winds. It is extremely sad as they were quite a feature beside the river and they certainly were beautiful trees. The City Council and the Water of Leith Conservation Trust had been consulted by the owners who were assured that the trees were their responsibility; and they had gained permission from the City Council for the removal of the trees (which is required as Dean Village is a Conservation Area). The trees were dying and so it was necessary to remove them. They were felled at the end of November.



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Market Target

My wife and I recently received through the mail a booklet of vouchers from the supermarket that we regularly use. There were offers of money off some goods and extra loyalty points for others. It was only when we looked at the vouchers carefully that we realised that many of these items were actually ones which we regularly buy. There were vouchers for our daily newspaper, a particular wine we favour, various foods we prefer, and toiletries that we use. We then realised that these vouchers were particularly aimed at us. A general marketing set of vouchers would not have so accurately matched our normal choices.

This gives rise to a symbiotic relationship. We are happy to receive these offers because we save a respectable amount of money. The supermarket recognises our regular spending and gives us a reward to keep us as customers.

However there is another aspect. The supermarket must have a detailed file on our purchases in order to produce this set of vouchers, and would be able to make reasonable assumptions about our income and lifestyle. I am sure that the supermarket would keep this information secure. But in these uncertain times it seems that any expert hacker can penetrate a supposedly secure computer system.

So, beware, shoppers! Big Brother could be watching you!

Old Person of Dean

I came across this limerick in a child's book of verse:

There was an old person of Dean
Who dined on one pea and one bean;
For he said, "More than that,
Would make me too fat",
That cautious old person of Dean.

Lear's last lines are often a little boring and repetitious. How about:
"I'm so thin I can hardly be seen".

or perhaps:

"And now I am ever so lean"

Inverleith Neighbourhood Partnership Meeting

The City of Edinburgh is divided into twelve partnerships. The objective of each partnership is to allow residents to consult and advise the various public service providers on how to provide better services. The Inverleith Partnership includes Blacklaw, Comely Bank, Craigleith, Drylaw, Inverleith, Stockbridge and Dean Village. On Thursday 15th November an open meeting of the Partnership was held at Broughton High School. The theme of the meeting was public transport.

Close to 100 participants were first treated to a video made by the pupils of a local primary school of their cycling alongside, but thankfully not in, the Water of Leith. The message was "take care, be safe and get healthy". The meeting then divided into six discussion groups, each involving a key council official: Cycling and Walking, Road Safety, Road Repairs, Parking, Winter Weather, and Public Transport. Participants spent fifteen minutes in each group before moving to another so that everyone could have their say on each topic.

Points raised with particular relevance to Dean Village residents were:

- Clearing ice-bound walkways in severe weather - the council has invested in much new equipment (e.g. pavement snow ploughs) which would be made available to localities
- Resurfacing Dean Path and Bell's Brae - such projects are on a list of priorities which are frequently

consulted. The replacement of setts is expensive but regarded as important in heritage areas.

- Upgrading Belford Road - Narrow, uneven pavements and very poor street lighting needs to be addressed. Also additional parking could be provided now it is a cul-de-sac.
- Walkers and cyclists - position notices advising each of their responsibility to others.
- Ensure easy access to walkways for the less able and those using electric vehicles.
- Stagger bus stops in Queensferry Road and reduce pedestrian congestion.
- Maintenance of walkways.

There were many other points raised by participants relevant to their areas. The Council officials present undertook to look at all the key issues raised.

It's a *Braw* Café

It's nearly Christmas, and at Braw we've been busy concocting delicious creations to get you into the festive spirit. Come and try our iced mulled wine fruitcake and our meringue snowmen, and see our amazing gingerbread house!

There's also a whole bunch of hearty winter soups, stews and quiches to stave off the chill. We're now busy serving suppers 'til 7.30 every weekday, so when you're running late and starving, or just in need of a pint of milk, we'll be delighted to see you.

St Bernard's Well Fundraising Appeal

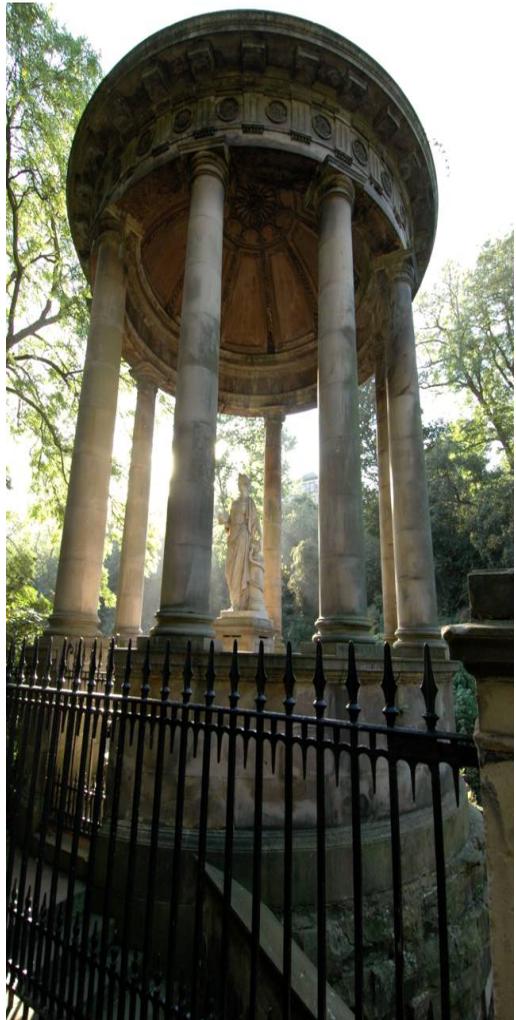
Please help to restore this hidden gem

St Bernard's Well will be the last in the Twelve Monuments Project, which has seen some of the city's most important statues and monuments restored. Edinburgh World Heritage is leading the fundraising effort to reach a target of £50,000.

St Bernard's Well was the idea of the eccentric judge Lord Gardenstone, who commissioned Alexander Nasymth in 1789 to design a new well house for the natural spring. The design was inspired by the Roman Temple of Vesta at Tivoli in Italy, complete with a statue to Hygeia the goddess of health.

The project will include re-securing a finial on the roof, stonework repairs and lime mortar re-pointing, conservation of stucco and cement decorations, mosaic work, and restoration of the pump mechanism.

If you would like to make a donation please contact Edinburgh World Heritage on 0131 220 7720 or info@ewht.org.uk



Winter Nature Notes by Barbara Mackay

The beginning of December. Was that a summer we had? The wettest for 100 years, the papers tell us, and the dullest since 1954. Not even rainbows could make it through our dull, overcast skies; no sun after rain, so no encouraging rainbows. However spiders enjoyed the weather, casting and spinning some wonderful webs. Some venture indoors looking for mates, but the females are crafty and stay very still so as not to be found, often hiding behind curtain rails. The awful weather was particularly cruel for bees, butterflies and other species. A shortage of insects also left our birds with less to feed on. Those who live near water had their nests swept away. One morning we came across a lost dipper bobbing up and down in a large puddle before it flew off. We had a clear view of its eyes with the larger lid coming up from below, unlike a human eyelid. I hope it found a haven somewhere. We had several visits from Jenny Wren. When I was little I used to think that she was married to Robin Redbreast. Makes sense!

The wet, wet weather has been a treat for slugs and snails. They have enjoyed climbing from Hosta to Hosta munching them to shreds. You can almost hear them chortling as they devour another helpless plant. One great compensation, however, has been the glorious autumn palette of colours of our native trees. Take a walk along Ravelston Dykes or in the Botanic Garden for a wonderful show. The threat to our ash trees is worrying and I do hope the authorities will stop dithering and act.

Now to the river itself: it has raced by on many days with enormous force. Nature obeys no speed limits. It does mean that the usual variety of rubbish, doors external and internal, kitchen junk, walloping great shelves and the odd supermarket trolley have sped past as we hung out our window in wonder. Poor Leith harbour must be one of the largest rubbish tips around! Alas, as I look out, the plastic bags, white, blue and red sweep by as if Jubilee was still here. There have been no sightings of ducklings and the ducks only reappeared last week when the river settled down. It will soon be the end of 2012 which I think we will remember for its unseasonability. Ah, when seasons were seasons!

There were rituals - spring-cleaning, Clark's sandals and white ankle socks, scarves and the lighting of coal fire as one proper season followed another.

Have a good Christmas and New Year.

Dean Village Events

St. Bernard's Well has now received some funding and so work will start on the external refurbishment. We hope that the work will be completed by the spring of 2013, and we hope to open the Well on the first Sunday of June.

Dean Village Association Annual General Meeting:- The AGM will take place on Tuesday 23rd April at 7.30 pm at the Dean Parish Church Hall. After the business of the meeting Paul McAuley, Collections Care Officer of the Museums Section, will give a talk on the origins, history and future of St. Bernard's Well.

Dean Village News

This issue of the Dean Village News has been delivered only to members of the Dean Village 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 your friends and neighbours 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.

Visit the Dean Village Website at
www.deanvillage.org
for the history and activities within
Dean Village

Dean Village Association

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Dean Village News

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

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

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