



# Dean Village News

Issue 177 Summer 2017  
[www.deanvillage.org](http://www.deanvillage.org)

## **The present Dean Village Association**

Previous issues of the News have described life in Dean Village up to the outbreak of the Second World War. After the conclusion of hostilities, things were very quiet in the village. Over the next twenty-five years the Council condemned some buildings as unfit for habitation. West Mill had closed and its condition was deteriorating. The ochre Hawthorn buildings were empty and had been vandalised. Lead had been stolen from the roofs, allowing ingress of water.

At the start of the 1970s, the Council wished to produce a plan for housing and transport across the city. Edinburgh citizens were invited to see possible plans in an exhibition on Market Street. Dean Village was one area likely to be principally affected. And so the present Dean Village Association was formed at a meeting in April 1971.

At the meeting Basil Skinner was elected Chairman and Lawrence Walker Vice-President. The Secretary was Tom Sellar and the Treasurer was Malcolm Christie. There were nine committee members. Events were organised, and the Association was an immediate success. Annual membership was set at fifty pence, and life membership was five pounds.

The committee decided to produce a monthly newsheet to keep residents informed. Issue number one of the Dean Village News came out in September, 1971. It was a typed newsletter, in the same format

as the present one, but just four pages long. Free to members, but non-members could buy it for two-and-a-half pence.

Chairman Basil Skinner wrote an introduction which started: - *“This is a series of monthly news sheets through which your committee will let you know the developments affecting the Dean Village area and of the programme of their own plans.”*

This issue went on to describe a really remarkable event. On the Saturday and Sunday of the last weekend of August and the first weekend of September no fewer than eighteen tours of the village were conducted, led by members of the Association. Four hundred and fifty people attended. At the end of each tour there was an exhibition of drawings and paintings of the old village. A brief talk was given, illustrated by slides of the Dean and Sunbury areas. These would have taken place in the Mission Church Hall.

Matters of concern seem familiar. There was a need to improve street cleaning, provide waste bins and control weeds. The future of the Dean and Sunbury areas was of concern because of the impending effect of changes in the village by Council planners. A door-to-door survey was being undertaken by Association members to ascertain the views of residents. This first issue concluded with news that a bus tour of East Lothian villages had been organised. Tickets were one pound, including tea.

The next few issues settled in by describing the main features of the village: - Kirkbrae House (then home of Basil Skinner); the Baxter’s building (then St. Mary’s Cathedral Mission Church); the *“burnt-out shell”* in Miller Row, often referred to as *“Jericho”*, firstly a giral to store grain, then part of Dean distillery, a costumier and theatre props warehouse, and soon to be developed as an architect’s office; Lindsay’s Mill, marked by the three mill-stones; and Well Court.

There were on-going reports on the activities of the planners. All of Dean Path, the village side of Belford Road, and the riversides from Belford Bridge to St. Bernard’s Bridge in Stockbridge would be affected. An interim report by the Planning and Transport Consultants for Edinburgh stated *“The Dean Bridge...enhances the gorge-like*

*character of the Water of Leith valley...this is an area which it is highly desirable to preserve in its present form. The Dean Village...quiet and attractive...its scale and character ought to be protected from the impact of road works."*

In November 1971 there was a fire in an upper floor of the Hawthorn Terrace. Three fire engines attended. This was one of the buildings closed down by the Council that the Association was trying to save for re-habitation.

In December 1971 the Association arranged a taxi to operate on Tuesday and Thursday, leaving Well Court at 10.00am precisely to go to Hope Street Post Office. Free to pensioners, but others would be encouraged to drop five pence through the Treasurer's letterbox.

In March 1972 a special meeting was held in the Mission Hall to enable members to exchange stories of times past. Basil Skinner told of his finding thirteen top hats in the roof space of Kirkbrae House, presumably cast-offs of Cabbie Stewart's drivers. Apparently Cabbie Stewart kept peacocks in his garden, which children could see through his slatted gate. He also kept two goats, which he tethered on the steep grassy slope down from Belford Road by his house, known as Granny's Hill. In the First World War, the stables once used by Cabbie Stewart, (where the loupin'-stane may still be seen), were requisitioned by the Lothian and Borders Horse Regiment to stable their horses.

Another member described horses and carts slithering down Bell's Brae to tip snow from the city into the river. Another story referred to the old feu duty of Bell's Brae House. The occupiers were required to pay to George Heriot's Trust the feu of one hen each year on Purification Day.

Adverts were placed by Dean Tannery for leather, suede and sheepskin gifts, Sloan's Garage of Belford Road for car hire, Burnside's licensed grocer of Damside, Cunningham's garage of Belford Mews and the Antique Centre of 14, Belford Road (five shops in one).

The first AGM took place in April 1972. To be continued.

## Dean Village Matters

**Belford Road:** - Over many years the Dean Village Association has been complaining to the Scottish Caledonian Trust, owners of the vacant site at 3 Belford Road, about the state of hoarding that protects the site. At regular intervals, one or other of the pieces of hardboard would be torn away, either by bad weather or by vandals. Each time the company did the minimum repair by replacing with a new piece of hardboard.

Now the edge of the site has deteriorated to such an extent that it has become dangerous. Now this very unlovely area has become even worse by the erection of barriers, so that we now have to walk in the road. This is a poor advertisement for Edinburgh to visitors who walk along Belford Road to get to the Galleries.

**Post Boxes:** - At the Annual General Meeting the matter was raised that the collection of letters from the Convening Court and Belford Road letterboxes had been changed from 5.30pm to 9.30am. The Secretary wrote to the Controller, but received the stock reply that they were doing the best they could for the area.

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### Planning applications in Dean Village

**Belford House and Douglas House (14/04512/FUL):** - Application to demolish Belford House and modify Douglas House into residential property. A report dated 12th October 2016 states that this application be granted subject to a legal agreement. The complexities of site ownership has prolonged the legal agreement which has not been concluded. An extension to the end of January was requested and granted. An unconfirmed report suggests that the developers, AMA Ltd. are concentrating their efforts elsewhere, and so there may be a few more years elapsing until work starts.

**RMJM Offices (14/04253/FUL):** - Conversion of offices into residences. Work is proceeding apace by Sundial Properties, as evidenced by the extensive scaffolding along Miller Row.

**3/4 Belford Road (14/04445/CLP):** - Building of residences on derelict site. Extensive archaeological work was carried out. Barriers have been put up along Belford Road, due to subsidence (See above).

## **The Importance of *News***

Your editor and his wife (Margaret) went to see “A sense of an ending”, a film of the book by Julian Barnes. A scene shows a history master asking his senior (boys only) class to describe life in the reign of Henry VIII. One bright spark proposes the thesis that we cannot possibly know because we were not there. We can only really understand anyone’s motives unless we know the person well. Thus we discover history only when someone writes about events, and these may be true, accurate or not. Was it Henry Ford who said “history is bunk”? Even today only close confidants of the likes of Theresa May or Nicola Sturgeon may know what is in their minds when they make decisions that affect us all.

So it is incumbent on newspapers to report the news of the day accurately. The Dean Village News is a very small part of this. A copy of each edition of the News is sent to the National Library of Scotland (NLS), the Central Library and to the library in Stockbridge, providing a continuous record since 1971. Reporting what happens in the village may be boring, irrelevant and immaterial to the reader of the day. But in 100 years time a historian may well find such information fascinating. Indeed, that is what your editor did by visiting NLS to read the first few issues of DVN to provide information for the leading article.

The editor of these early issues (the Secretary – Tom Sellar) asked readers to send him their memories of times past in Dean Village. Your present editor will follow his example and request readers to do the same. This may be done by writing an article, sending a letter to the editor, or a note by text or email. Such memories should be recorded or will be lost for ever.

We have started putting past issues of the Dean Village News on our website - [deanvillage.org](http://deanvillage.org). There will also be found a copy of our constitution, a membership form, and latest news. Contributions from members would be welcome.

## **Report of the 46th Annual General Meeting**

The Chairman reported that the plans to replace Belford House and Douglas House with flats and town houses were on hold until assurances regarding support of community projects had been received by the planning committee. The conversion of the offices in Miller Row into residential dwellings by Sundial Properties is well under way. At the derelict site at the east end of Belford Road archaeological work has been carried out, but no further activity has been seen.

The Secretary reported that the Dean Valley Regeneration Ltd. had received the first part of a feasibility study which concentrated on the state of Miller Row. This was funded in part by SUTRANS, who are concerned with walkways and cycleways. The draft report may be seen on the DVRL website. The contract for the second part of the feasibility study has yet to be awarded, which will consider the valley of the Water of Leith as a whole. Money has yet to be raised to pay for this study. When completed, and accepted by interested parties, the process of applying for a lottery grant may proceed.

Last year Dean Path was repaved and resurfaced. The Well Court clock has been repaired and restarted by the new owner of the Hall. The committee is planning to put past issues of the Dean Village News on the website.

The acting Treasurer reported that income for this year was £2124.44, made up mainly of membership subscriptions (£705.00), walks (£688.32), donations (£555.00) and advertising in Dean Village News (£84). Expenditure for the year was £1025.93, made up of printing Dean Village News (£493.86), fees and membership of other bodies (£331.00). The end of year balance in the bank accounts was £10650.54. The accounts would be presented to OSCR shortly.

The following were re-elected for the year 2017 - 2018: -  
Chairman; - Barry Mackay, Vice-Chairman: - Javier Albert,  
Secretary: David Perry, Treasurer: - Vacancy, and committee  
members: - Caroline Gerard, Conrad Hughes, Charlie Hughes and  
Pat Sinclair.

Membership fees would remain the same, which are

Annual membership:	£7 single, £10 couple
Concession:	£3 single, £5 couple
Life membership:	£50 single, £75 couple
Company membership:	£75

The committee has arranged to place a memorial bench to the late Dorothy Forrester, our secretary for 25 years, in Belford Road. The cost will be £1700 for a black metal bench.

The landslip on the pathway by the upper weir is causing residents and visitors alike great inconvenience. Steven Webley, Forestry and Natural Heritage Manager has given this statement: - *"The additional investigations have been completed by the appointed engineers of the homeowner above the landslip. The Council's legal team is currently in negotiation with the homeowner's legal representatives to progress the resolution of re-opening the footpath as soon as possible."*

St. Bernard's Well will be opening on the first Sundays of the summer months, the Sundays of the Edinburgh Festival, and Doors Open Sunday. Cemetery and village tours will be conducted in the summer. DVA will be participating in the History Festival between 17<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> November

The post-boxes on Dean Path and by Café Braw had changed collection times from 17.30 to 09.30. The Secretary would write and ask that the original time be restored.

## Happenings at St. Bernard's Well

St. Bernard's Well is the property of the City of Edinburgh Council, bequeathed to them by the widow of the last private owner, William Nelson. The Well is administered by the Museum Collections Centre, based in Broughton Market. The Collections Care Officer has given permission for the Dean Village Association to open the Well to the public from time to time. This year, the Well will be open on all the Sundays of August from noon to 3pm. and on Doors Open Sunday, 24th September, from 11am till 4pm.

The Well is kept locked at other times, and the gate which leads to the upper, open area where resides the statue of Hygeia, the goddess of health and well-being, is secured by a chain and padlock. This precaution does not prevent the more agile members of the public from climbing over the gate and sometimes leaving their litter behind. On one occasion the statue was given a necklace of empty beer cans. And some time ago a graffiti artist and comedian had written "Stella Artois" on Hygeia's Cup of Knowledge.

In May, a Dean resident noticed that the padlock and part of the chain were missing, and the gate was open. She later secured the ends of the chain with a bootlace in such a way as to appear that the gate was securely padlocked. Some stiff wire was later added, but that is how it remained when last seen.

The Water of Leith Conservation Trust has also been busy at the Well. A grant for environmental improvement had been obtained from Tesco. In July, Helen Brown led a team of volunteers to cut back excessive growth, and suitably plant the area. The railings along the riverbank have been painted, and a new notice describing the history of the Well has recently appeared.

### Dorothy Forrester Memorial Bench

The committee is arranging with the Council to place a black metal bench somewhere in Dean Village, as a tribute to our late Secretary and Honorary President, Dorothy Forrester. The memorial plaque will read "*Dorothy L. Forrester 1922-2012 Secretary of the Dean Village Association for 25 years*". She lived in Belford Road, and latterly in Lynedoch House. The original plan was to place the bench at a suitable location somewhere along Belford Road, but no position could be found which did not intrude upon the privacy or peace of nearby residents. The eventual site is yet to be decided.



## A Welcome Development in Flood Prevention

Those of us who like to walk along the Water of Leith riverside path to Slateford and beyond have had to follow diversions due to flood prevention works. These are in progress around Roseburn Park, where a wall has been erected to protect Murrayfield. Then, at the entry to the Ice Rink, walkers cannot continue along the pathway but must cross the bridge and walk along Riversdale Crescent and Road, then along Baird Grove.

Particularly annoying has been that at this point walkers are sent up Baird Drive to the busy Balgreen Road, under the pedestrian tunnel that carries the railway (and tram), and back down Pansey Walk to rejoin the river path, a deviation of ten to fifteen minutes.

Thankfully, the riverside path at the corner of Baird Drive and Grove has now been opened. So it is now possible to walk along the path, under the rail bridge and on to Saughton Park in just a few minutes.

### **Sue Light**

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## **My Friends in the Cemetery XXIX by David Perry**

### **Victims of the sinking of the Royal Charter**

The Royal Charter was a steam ship used mainly on the route between Liverpool and Melbourne. She was a new type of ship, iron-hulled, bearing sails as well as a steam engine. As a result she was a very fast ship for the times, able to make the journey between England and Australia by way of Cape Horn in less than 60 days. She could take up to six hundred passengers, some in first class, and there was some cargo space.

This fateful voyage started from Melbourne in late August 1859. The precise number of passengers is not known as several passengers and crew boarded the ship very late. The passengers numbered about three hundred and seventy, with one hundred and twelve crew members. This was the time of the great gold rush in Victoria, at the likes of Ballarat and Bendigo. Many miners had struck it rich, and were carrying large amounts of gold. There was also a considerable amount of gold in the cargo area, as well as copper and silver.

All went well on the voyage until the passage up the Irish Sea. On 25th October, passing by Anglesey, the weather was getting worse. The atmospheric pressure as shown by the ship's barometer was dropping rapidly, a harbinger of bad weather. There is an unconfirmed account that some passengers advised the captain, Thomas Taylor, to put into the harbour at Holyhead, to wait out the coming storm. But the captain decided to carry on: the ship had rounded Anglesey, and was only eighty miles from Liverpool.

During the evening the force of the wind increased, firstly to storm force 10, and then to hurricane force 12. In addition, the direction of the wind changed, forcing the ship towards the rocks off Anglesey. The anchors were put out at 11pm, but after an hour the chains snapped. The ship's masts were cut down to reduce exposure to the wind, but the steam engines could not make any progress in the mountainous seas. The ship was driven on to a sandbank, and then, as the tide rose, on to the rocks where she quickly broke up.

A few people managed to struggle ashore. One brave Maltese seaman, known as Joseph Rogers, managed to swim ashore with a rope and saved several passengers (for which he later received a silver medal and £10). But the majority of passengers and crew, numbering over four hundred and fifty, died. The gold miners had to decide “your money or your life”. Sadly they lost their lives, as gold is not known for its buoyant properties. Most died by being dashed onto the rocks, rather than by drowning.

The disaster did lead to changes at the Meteorological Office. Captain Robert Fitzroy, officer in charge (yes - he of the Beagle), immediately established fifteen weather stations which would transmit reports to him by telegraph. By 1861 weather forecasts and gale warnings were introduced to prevent similar tragedies. This did not stop the ship, the Hindlea, striking the same rocks exactly one hundred years later. This time the local lifeboat was able to save all on board.

So what has the above story have to do with Dean Cemetery? Here there is a monument to the Murray family, four members having perished in the disaster. The inscription reads “*Sacred to the memory of James Murray of Wick, Caithness and Mulbourne, Victoria, Jane Ross his wife William James, their son, perished in the steamship Royal Charter off the coast of Wales 26th October 1859, whose remains rest here, and in memory of Alexandra Jane, their daughter, drowned at the same time but whose body was never recovered.*

*Erected by their sorrowing surviving son and daughter”*

The monument is found by taking the left path on entering the cemetery from Dean Path, and proceeding to the western end. It rests against the cemetery boundary wall and is in the form of a coped stone. The inscription on the stonework behind is barely readable, but there is a carved angel with the banner “And the sea shall give up her dead”

Newspaper reports of the time told of how divers went into the water after the gale had passed, but saw no corpses beneath; they found a small amount of gold and a lot of copper. Some apparel was washed up on the shore, amongst which was a stocking labelled “Jane Murray”. But the body of Alexandra Jane was never recovered.

## Hawthornbank Regeneration

Those of us who walk through the Hawthornbank flats area to get to and from the city will not have failed to notice the improvements in the environment that have taken place there. The residents of the Hawthornbank houses and flats have approved a programme of regeneration. An environmental advisor, resident Don Jardine has been appointed. Don, together with the newly appointed gardener, has transformed the area. The wooden fence by the riverside has been repaired. The sad and neglected strip of garden alongside the fence has been replaced by paving at the western end, and with newly planted shrubs at the eastern end. The photos show the before and after views by the riverside.

In addition, other areas of paving have been replaced with more attractive planted gardens. The building façades have been surveyed and regeneration is in hand. And there are plans to improve the iconic views up and down the river in that area.

So many congratulations to the Hawthornbank residents for taking on this responsibility.



**Riverside before regeneration**



**Western area ..... after regeneration ..... Eastern area**





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## **Previously - Scotland's History Festival**

The History Festival will take place this year from Friday 17<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> November. The Dean Village Association will host some village and cemetery walks. The Festival will commemorate the life of Elsie Inglis who died on November 26<sup>th</sup> 1917, conducting walks and talks on the life of this great medical pioneer. See [historyfest.co.uk](http://historyfest.co.uk).

## **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 others and so assist in looking after our village. Yearly membership is £7 (£10 per couple) or life membership is £50 (£75 per couple). There is a concessionary annual rate of £3 single and £5 couple.

## Summer Nature Notes      by Barbara Mackay

After a few days of welcome sunshine we seem to be back to our normal up and down, disappointing summer. So I decided I would ask you to use your imaginations and create your own idealised summer. Enjoy the mellow evening sun casting its rays on the coloured buildings in Belford Road. Enjoy the ripples and gurgles in the Water of Leith as the dippers skim over it. Enjoy the patient and successful fishing of the heron as it picks a productive stretch. Enjoy your freshly poured large glass of white wine (Picpoul de Pinet perhaps). Enjoy the chatter of the tourists as they make their leisurely way unimpeded to the Galleries of Modern Art.

Now we are set for our summer which, down south at least, is likely (reportedly) to be the hottest for forty-one years.

There may be less wildlife to observe although I will mention single sightings of a bullfinch, a goldfinch and several robins as well as a pair of magpies who visit our balcony regularly and “checker, checker, checker” merrily. Do you remember the old rhyme about them:-

*One for sorrow, two for joy,  
Three for a girl, four for a boy,  
Five for silver, six for gold.  
Seven for a secret never to be told,  
Eight for a dream, nine for a wish.*

We do have an abundance of foliage and fallen trees on the riverbanks and stones of all sizes in the stream assuming fantastic shapes. For example, opposite to us there is a large “alligator”. Fortunately it hasn’t moved. The smaller branches suggest the shapes of spectacle frames, oval, round, square. Really as good a selection as an optometrist could provide. But we miss the human hand of our riparian sculptor who for some years made the most appealing figures seemingly defying the laws of gravity. Wow! His fingers must have been frozen.

Ivy is everywhere. It is a tough old plant. The boundary wall of Sunbury House has long since disappeared under its green mantle. Birds like to nest in ivy but I haven’t seen so much of them this year.

## It's a *Braw* Café

Braw will be open seven days a week until 8pm (20.00hrs) for the months of August and September. Our new layout allows us to serve customers quickly even when tourists are dawdling at the dell. So come round and enjoy our sunny seated area or just pop in to grab a few essentials such as free range eggs, home cooking, artisan rolls, milk and cheese.

We look forward to seeing you.

Kind regards to all, Meg.

To combat urban pollution, the forward-thinking city of Glasgow is to erect two living walls of ivy giving an environmental benefit equivalent to five hundred trees. There are also suggestions that street lighting should be switched off periodically so that trees can sleep properly in natural nocturnal shades. And above all this earthbound activity are the protean clouds. We have all gazed at these “castles in the air” seen an amazing variety of shapes or wished for something or shuddered at the signs of an approaching storm.

I hope the weather is kind and that you enjoy the remaining precious summer months.

*(Editor writes:- This will be the last of Barbara's pieces about observations of nature from her (and John's) home by the Water of Leith. On our reader's behalf we thank her very much for her efforts over many years, and wish her all the best for the future.)*

# Dean Village Association

## Committee 2017 - 2018

**Chairman:** Barry Mackay, chair@deanvillage.org

**Vice-Chairman:** Javier Albert,

**Secretary:** David Perry, 22 Damside EH4 3BB

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**Committee members:** Charlie Hughes, Conrad Hughes,  
Pat Sinclair, Bob Morley, Evelyn Whitfield

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

14<sup>th</sup> November 2017

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

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