

Dean Village News

Issue 178 December 2017

www.deanvillage.org

Important Notice

For many years members have taken part in the annual clean up of the riverbanks. Following on from this work the committee of the Dean Village Association has been in discussion with representatives from the Water of Leith Conservation Trust and wishes to commence a plan of environmental improvements along the banks of the river between the road bridge and footbridge in Dean Village. The first stage would be to cut back existing plant growth, particularly brambles, to an acceptable level. There would follow a trial planting of recommended species of native plants and shrubs in the bank adjacent to Hawthornbank Lane. Over the year, the plants best suited to the conditions of the area can be identified.

This work will require a grant from the Dean Village Association. The riverbanks are part-owned by residents of the surrounding buildings and any plans will be discussed with them.

The committee would appreciate receiving the views of Association members. Please contact the Secretary at: - secretary@deanvillage.org, or by post to 22 Damside.

Dean Village Association - the first years

These extracts from the News in years 1972/3 show developments being proposed that merited close consideration by residents.

Proposed Conservation Area: - For two weeks in September 1972 the Town Planning Department of the Corporation of Edinburgh held an exhibition in Belford Church Hall at which proposals were made for establishing Dean Village as a Conservation Area. Five hundred and fourteen people attended. Questionnaires were supplied so that residents could express their views. One hundred and four were returned of which fourteen came from villagers.

The committee wished residents to make their views known to the Corporation. The present situation was that only a few buildings in the village were protected as "listed". Any other development would be considered under normal planning application rules. If the village was declared a "Conservation Area" it is worthy of special protection with regard to character and environmental quality. Any future planning application would be carefully scrutinised so that there would be no infringement of the overall character of the village, described as residential. Small businesses and firms of a suitable nature would not be excluded, but wholesale office developments and large industries would not be allowed.

The boundaries of the Conservation Area now needed to be defined. Also decisions were urgently required on the type of developments needed, for example, on the High Green and the Tannery sites. The committee would like to see family housing, no hotels, better street lighting, the re-opening of the Broad Stairs and regulated traffic flow.

Development of the tannery site: - In December 1972 Weir Construction Ltd of Coatbridge applied for outline planning consent for redevelopment of this area. The proposals are for sixty-four flatted houses. This plan would increase the population of Dean Village by 75%. The committee responded by saying that it did not oppose this development but a lesser density should be considered. There should be a greater provision of family housing rather than small flats. There should be

strict control of traffic and parking. Consideration should be given to the provision of light industry, as the tannery had supplied thirty-five jobs. The plans as they stood were unyielding and too dominating. These opinions were sent to the planning department.

Belford Road site: - In June 1973 another series of proposals were put forward for this site, but no application has been made.

West Mill: - In July 1973 it was reported that the first occupancy of the flats took place at the end of June.

Drumsheugh Toll: - A welcome was given to the Waddell School of Music who, together with the Edinburgh Society of Musicians, have recently moved into Drumsheugh Toll. The School was founded by William Waddell in 1887 and located in Princes Street. It later moved to the Synod Hall in Castle Street where it stayed for over fifty years. The school has one hundred pupils, and is devoted entirely to stringed instruments. Already young people may be seen carrying their instruments into the building for Saturday morning lessons.

Dean Cemetery: An article in the March Village News of 1973 recounted the history of the cemetery. When first opened in 1845 it was called the Edinburgh Western Cemetery, one of several new cemeteries that formed a ring around Edinburgh. The Company paid £8033 for Dean House in eight and a half acres of ground. Curved stones from the demolished house were built into the cemetery's retaining walls, including "David killing the Lion" and various Nisbet Coats of Arms. David Cousin, the City Architect, was responsible for this and other cemetery layouts. Popularity of the cemetery required enlargements. In 1871 land was bought from Colonel Learmonth comprising three and a half acres between the North wall and Ravelston Terrace. In 1877 a further area was purchased from Learmonth between Ravelston Terrace and Queensferry Road. In 1930 Ravelston Nursery Garden was added. Later issues of the News described the residents therein.

Mary Syme Boyd, a Dean Village sculptor who lived and had a studio in Belford Mews, wrote this letter to the News in response to a reader's request about cemetery resident Tom Ranken. He is commemorated with a stone relief of a Labrador in an arch around which are the notes

of Beethoven's "Ode to Joy".

"Tom Ranken was a country-loving gentleman whose passions were music, Labradors, shooting and fishing. I do not remember where he lived. I was commissioned to make the model of the Labrador retriever which I modelled from my own, old black Labrador "Peter". Unfortunately the carver compressed the dog into a smaller archway which spoiled the proportions of the design as a whole. The plaster cast of the dog still lies in my stable. Sadly I was not allowed to bury Peter beneath "his" memorial"

Mary Syme Boyd's work may be seen in St. Mary's Cathedral in the Dorothy Walpole Font and in the Angels carved in the memory of Hugh Walpole. Further afield, in Tiltenberg, Holland, there are her Stations of the Cross.

Poetry - of sorts: - Several residents, and others, were inspired to write poems about the village and the river. The issue of November 1972 gave excerpts from a particularly excruciating poem by William McGonagall (1825 - 1902) entitled "The River of Leith", in which he describes getting a cup of water from St. Bernard's Well for one penny. The poem ends: -

*"And I'm sure you will get a very good treat,
Because the River of Leith cannot be beat"*

Planning applications in Dean Village

Belford House and Douglas House (14/04512/FUL): - The application originally submitted on 31st October 2014 has been granted on 30th May 2017 with certain conditions: - Archaeological work must be implemented before development begins. A tree protection plan shall be fully implemented before and throughout the development. A detailed specification of all proposed external materials should be approved by Planning and Building Standards. The approved landscaping scheme shall be fully implemented within six months of the completion of the development. Noise protection measures must be put in place. The hours of the commercial unit will be restricted to 0700 to 1900 Monday to Saturday.

RMJM Offices (14/05243/FUL): - The conversion of offices into residences is nearing completion. All scaffolding is scheduled to come down by February 2018.

3/4 Belford Road (14/04445/CLP): - A metal plate has been put in place over the area of subsidence into this site. The barriers have been removed.

Dorothy Forrester Memorial Bench

The committee has commissioned the Parks and Greenspace section of Edinburgh Council to make a black metal bench as a tribute to our late Secretary and Honorary President, Dorothy Forrester. The memorial plaque reads "*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.

Agreement has been reached with the Trustees of Dean Cemetery to put the bench in their grounds. It has been placed in front of the north-facing side of the obelisk dedicated to soldiers in the 79th Cameron Highlanders who died in the East Indies from 1857 to 1871 and in the Crimean war 1854 to 1855.

Enter through the main cemetery gate, and the obelisk is straight ahead. It is well positioned for a spot of quiet contemplation.

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Recollections of past Dean

(In the last issue the editor requested readers to relate past memories of Dean Village. Dot Law has responded by describing the life and times of her husband Jim Law.)

My late husband, Jim Law, was born in Dean Village in February 1934. The family lived at 4, Well Court. Jim's dad was a wood flour miller at Bell's Mills. His grandfather was a coachman to the sister of John Ritchie Findlay, proprietor of the Scotsman. Jim and his sister, Margaret, were educated at Dean Village School, as was their mother twenty five years earlier. Jim went on to Broughton Secondary School at McDonald Road.

Life in Dean Village was punctuated by the passage of carts loaded with skins destined for Legget's skinnery. The carts had to be braked hard on their descent of Bell's Brae to stop over-running the horses. The smell of these skins was truly horrendous, and was accompanied by a plague of bluebottles which then invaded their houses.

Jim was a cabinet maker/joiner and worked with Sam Inglis and Sandy McIvor who owned a joinery business. He was a Saturday boy with them, taken on as an apprentice. Their workshop backed onto the river, adjacent to Bell's Mills: the flour mill, owned by the Walker family. The mill was powered by a water wheel, the only one still operating by this method. As well as milling to produce wood flour, the waterwheel generated electricity for the mill and the manager's house.

Jim served with the Royal Scots Greys during his two years of National Service. During this time his job was kept open for him. Jim eventually took over Inglis and McIvor as sole proprietor. Jim is pic-



tured here outside his workshop, which was originally a weaver's shed. It had no running water or a toilet. But he had the advantage that his father worked in the mill, so he could go there to use their facilities and fill his kettle.

Jim and I met through a mutual interest in speedway racing and playing skittles. People thought that I must be a resident as I was in Dean Village so often during our courting days. We married in 1966, having a daughter and a son. Jim was well-known as he had grown up in the firm and did work to most of the big houses in the area, sometimes doing odd jobs like changing curtains seasonally, and putting in new light bulbs. He even lifted carpets when the children of the house had birthday parties so that they could dance. He did work for children and grandchildren of original Inglis and McIvor customers. I feel that he was a social joiner who looked after his elderly customers as if they were family.

But Jim was lucky to avoid one of the greatest tragedies of the time. In March 1971, there was a gigantic dust explosion at Bells' Mills. Reports at the time describe the devastation as like being hit by a 250-pound bomb. Flames shot one hundred feet into the air. The sound of the explosion was heard in William Street. It was a miracle that no-one was killed, but three were badly injured, including the owner Lawrence Walker. Jim was working away at one of his clients at the time: she may have saved his life by keeping him talking for quite a while. But despite the mill being blown apart, Jim's shed was relatively unscathed.

There were repercussions. Lawrence Walker sold the site to Stakis to build the hotel. Jim was told to vacate his premises as it was on mill land. He moved his workshop to the garden of our home in Ravelston Terrace. He was able to carry on as before.

Jim died in 1987 and the firm closed down, as our son was too young to carry on the business. We had nearly twenty-one years of marriage and I have many happy memories of social occasions with the DVA members, bus drives, Burns suppers and social evenings when the whole village seemed to be there.

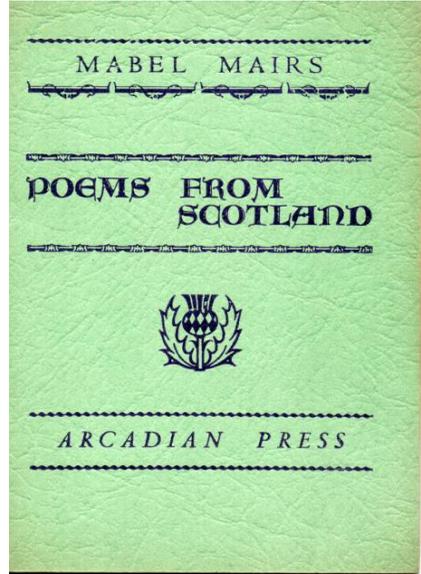
A poem for Dean

Thanks to Dot Law for her recollections of times past. She also came across a book of poems by Mabel Mairs, who once lived at Well Court between 1940 and 1960. The collection includes this tribute to our village.

OK, it is of its time, but rather sweet. The picture painted is truly idyllic, and the sentiments are heartfelt.

The Valley of Dean

Not far from the crowded city,
The roar of traffic, and rush,
I saw, one day, as I strolled away,
A picture for an artist's brush.
Banks and braes, and woodland ways,
So lovely, fresh and green,
Trees hang low, where the waters flow,
Way down in the "Valley of Dean".
Gardens gay, where children play,
Down by the side of the stream;
A mineral well, a shady dell,
Where waterfalls glisten and gleam;
O'erhead tall trees, their arms entwined-
A charming gesture too-
For surely, this is Lover' Lane,
Where lads and lasses woo,
Fair as a queen, in a mantle of green,
Her emeralds and diamonds so rare,
Mother Nature, so grand, found this fairyland
And planted a paradise there.



Isabella Bird and Japan

Way back in 2010, the life of Isabella Bird was featured in our cemetery series (DVN 157). Born in 1831 she travelled widely. In the 1870s she visited Japan, China, Vietnam, Singapore and Malaysia. Later, in the 1890s, having had missionary and some medical training she set off for India, Tibet, Persia, Kurdistan and Turkey. She pushed on to China, Korea, and then Morocco. She related her experiences in a series of books. She was elected Fellow of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society (RSGS) in 1890, the first woman to be so honoured.

Her life has caught the attention of Professor Kiyonori Kanasaka of Kyoto University. He has written extensively about her, and has just completed his latest work *“Isabella Bird and Japan”*. Professor Kanasaka visited the Society’s headquarters in Perth in June. Former Chairman, Roger Watts, himself an authority on the life of Isabella, wrote the following accolade of this new book:- *“A scholarly book about Isabella’s Japanese adventures which also contains a thorough and useful summary of her wider world travels. The author breaks new ground with well-researched views on what motivated her visit in 1878 to a Japan which was being transformed in the Meiji era.”*

The life of Isabella also features in the recently published book *“The Great Horizon: 50 tales of exploration”*, researched and written by Jo Woolf, RSGS’s Writer in Residence. The exploits of fifty people connected to RSGS are described. The book has received excellent reviews, including one from “Undiscovered Scotland” *“The result is a book you could easily sit down and read from cover.....”*

Past issues of Dean Village News

We have a small number of printed past issues of the Dean Village News back to issue 149 (Autumn 2007). We are starting to put back issues on the Dean Village website. Issues No 168 to 175 may be seen there now. We plan to put all back issues to No. 154 (Autumn 2009) on the website in due course. Go to deanvillage.org/documents.

My Friends in the Cemetery XXX by David Perry

John Irving, Robert Goodsir and John Bellany: an update

Irving and Goodsir were connected with the Franklin Expedition (see issue DVN 156). An exhibition at the Greenwich Maritime Museum has given more detail following the discovery of the two sunken ships, the Erebus and the Terror, in recent years. An exhibition of fifty paintings by Bellany (see issue DVN 171), and a film and talk about his life was given at Fortnum and Mason in October.

1) **The Franklin Expedition.** By 1845 the Royal Navy had long cherished the idea of finding a way to the eastern markets around the north of Canada. Two ships, the Erebus and Terror, were especially fitted out to endure several years in the arctic. They had very large cargo areas to store provisions and were fitted with steam engines and iron clad bows to break through the ice.

Captain John Franklin had experience of polar conditions, having led an over-land expedition which suffered starvation, suffering and murder. He recounted this experience in his 1823 book "Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea". He was appointed Commander of this latest expedition, with James FitzJames as captain of the Erebus, and John Irving as lieutenant. Francis Crozier was captain of the Terror, with Harry Goodsir, brother of Robert, as assistant surgeon to Stephen Stanley. (A contemporary photograph of Harry was on display). There were two ship's boys (first class) on each ship.

The ships set sail on 19th May 1845 and picked up supplies in the Orkneys. In July they arrived at the Whale Fish Islands off Greenland. More supplies were taken on. There were three years of provisions, fuel and clothing. Franklin had brought enough wine to entertain his officers for the expected duration. The last letters were sent. Some of these reveal life on board the ships. All had extra jobs to do. Irving had the special task of monitoring Terror's ten chronometers, and taking astronomical measurements. Harry Goodsir was kept busy identifying new species with his microscope. One letter says "Goodsir is catching the most extraordinary animals in his net, and is in ecstasies". The men had to be kept amused: music, dancing, education (slates and chalk were provided), card playing and chess. There was a monkey on board the Terror.

Their only sighting after they left the island was by whaling ships. It is now known that the ships spent the winter of 1846 off Beechey Island, where three men died and were buried. In the summer of 1846 they were searching for the

passage, but became stuck in ice in September. At some point in the next two years the men left the ships to try to walk across King William Island to Canada. No-one was ever found alive.

The navy sent the first ships out to search for Franklin in 1849. Robert Goodsir was a surgeon on board the "Advice" going in search of his brother. The next year he went on another search financed by Lady Jane Franklin. Orca-dian John Rae had encountered Inuits who had come across the remains of some of the sailors. He purchased relics from the Inuits, which included a bone-handled knife and a silver disc engraved "Sir John Franklin KCB, His Badge of Royal Hanoverian Guelphic Order". He reported these finds, adding that there was evidence of cannibalism. This was rejected outright by Lady Jane. Luminaries like Dickens and Darwin opined that the Inuits had killed them. Rae was awarded £10,000 reward, but his reputation was sullied. His work did have the effect of concentrating the search into a smaller area.

Over the next years remains were found scattered around the west coast of King William Island. A partial skeleton, possibly of Harry Goodsir, was brought back in 1873, and is now interred in the Royal Naval College Chapel, Greenwich. In 1878 Lt Schwatka of the Canadian Navy found the last resting-place of some of the men, including Lt. Irving, whose remains he brought back to Edinburgh to be buried in Dean Cemetery

The wreck of the "Erebus" was found on 2nd September 2014, ten metres under the sea to the west of Canada's Adelaide Peninsula. The wreck was remarkably well preserved: the hull was intact but the upper rigging was scattered about. The ships bell was raised. Two years later "Terror" was found fifty kilometres to the north, by King Williams Island.

These areas will now be regarded as National Historic Sites. Further information can be found on ParksCanada.gc.ca/franklin.

2) John Bellany. Fortnum and Mason, in collaboration with collector Frank Cohen, staged an exhibition of fifty of John Bellany's pieces. These were selected from every period of his working life, some from Cohen's collection and some from Bellany's estate. They range in size from small ink washes, available for £2000, to a massive wall piece, priced at £75000. The exhibition was a strange mixture of art gallery and orienteering. The works were scattered over the six floors of the store. A handy booklet told you where to find each piece, floor by floor. This meant that as you searched for each one, you passed by all the goodies on display.

On the evening of Thursday, October 5th, there was a film about Bellany's life, made by his son Paul. This included a very frank, no-holds-barred description of some of the more difficult times. He grew up in Port Seton and Eyemouth, and so fisherfolk, fish and boats are present in many of his works. He studied at Edinburgh College of Art in the early sixties, showing his sometimes huge paintings on the Mound, and storing them overnight in Milne's Bar.

He moved to London, married Helen, and they had three children. It was a difficult marriage - he loved them all, but on his terms. He left them, and the children were told that "he was away on holiday". He divorced Helen, and then met and married Juliet. This greatly upset the children - they always hoped their mother and father would get back together. As they got older, they kept bad company, and sometimes got into trouble. By this time Bellany was drinking heavily. He would drink all day, perhaps a full bottle of bacardi, and paint all night, effectively using painting as a therapy.

In September 1984 he went to pay homage to Georges Braque, and had an epiphany. He drank no more. But the damage had been done. He was diagnosed with liver failure. He was in hospital, and Juliet, not well herself, was not able to look after him. So Helen stepped in. Then Juliet took her own life. John remarried Helen, twenty years after their first marriage.

1986 may be regarded as the year of Bellany. He was awarded an exhibition at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, the first living artist to receive this honour. He needed an iconic portrait as the centrepiece of the exhibition. His portrait of Ian Botham is regarded as one of his best, and featured on the television news. At his appearance at the exhibition he was clapped and cheered, one of the most important days of his life. He later did a poster for the Edinburgh Festival, and got Sean Connery to sit for it.

David Bowie was a collector of Bellany's work. In the window of Fortnum and Mason was a 1988 portrait of the artist, playing the accordion, with David Bowie entitled "Bonjour Monsieur Bowie". But by Christmas, he was in a terrible state, and doctors said that there was little that could be done. Then the possibility of a liver transplant came up. A liver became available and a nine-hour operation ensued. The liver did not take straight away, but Bellany called for a pencil and paper.

He was in some agony at this time but continued drawing and painting. He completed around sixty paintings to show what it was like to have a liver transplant. He used it as his analgesic. But he was on his way back, and glad to be alive. He gradually regained strength and became reunited with his fam-



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ily. He travelled abroad, and settled in Italy, completing many paintings of the people and landscapes. He revelled in his second chance of life, eventually passing away in 2013, and came to rest in Dean Cemetery,

The Secretary has a catalogue of his paintings that were exhibited, and a DVD of the film of his life made by his son Paul. Any member may borrow these on application to the secretary (contact details on back page).

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.

Nature Notes by Tim Steiner

Was that it? Another year has nearly passed. The sycamore leaves, such stunning colours in October, are all down now. The trees have taken the chlorophyll back in from those leaves, and stored it away for next year. The house martins are gone. More recently the skeins of geese have joined them on the way south, their honking is clearly audible on a calm day even over the babble of the river.

The squirrels have cached their nuts and are hoping that they won't be found by others. The berries we couldn't reach to pick have rotted on the brambles (why don't any resourceful animals or birds eat them?) The mushrooms poking up through the soil and on decaying wood remind of the recycling work the fungi are doing. Those fallen leaves are already food for countless insects, and being turned back into soil.

All this autumnal activity is part of the great cycles of nature. The seasons change in their regular patterns, but how nature reacts is slightly different each year, in response to different weather and maybe other influences unknown. The leaf fall has been late this year, perhaps because it has been so dry and calm for the last few weeks. In mid-November some of the oaks seemed to have hardly noticed that summer had gone. Bats were flying over the river in late October.

This cyclical effect, where we know what changes are coming with the seasons, but also that every year will be different from the last, is at the heart of our connection with nature. We know what to expect, yet there are always surprises. It ensures that there is always something of interest for us all in the flora and fauna of the village.

Speaking of cycles, I now pick up the baton of Nature Notes. Our thanks to Barbara Mackay for all her contributions to the News over the years, and especially of all the avian observations. Keep watching the birds, please, Barbara, so you can help me with ideas for content for future editions!

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 2018, from 11.00 till 14.00hrs. to serve hangover cures.

We at Braw look forward to seeing you

Meg xxx

Water of Leith Walkway

How nice it would be to walk along by the Water of Leith without obstruction. But this is not to be in the foreseeable future.

The good news is that the flood protection works around Murrayfield have been completed. It is now possible to walk from Roseburn to Balgreen Road along the new walkway. But at Saughton Park there is a diversion, operable until August of next year, while works are conducted in the Park. Follow the arrows marked "John Muir Way"

Problems with the landslip continue. But there is an additional obstruction between Belford Bridge and below Donaldson's as restorative work is conducted by the Council until April 2018. The nearest way down to the walkway is from Magdala Crescent down the steps vside Donaldson's. Alternatiely, through the Modern Art Gallery grounds, when open.

Dean Village Association

Committee 2017 - 2018

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

14th March 2018

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

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