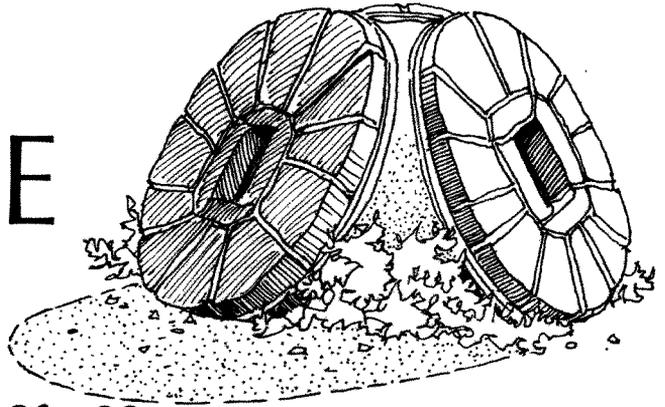


DEAN VILLAGE NEWS



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10p

Issued free to members of the Association

GROVE COTTAGE "

THE WATER OF LEITH

At 24 Cockburn Street the Planning Department has an exhibition about the Water of Leith Walkway. It is likely to continue until January.

Leaflets are available there about certain sections. These include a new edition of the one on Dean Bank Footpath (Dean Path to Belford Bridge.) The cantilever footbridge underneath Belford Bridge has still not been constructed by Ladbrooke's (owners of the Dragonara Hotel), although it is stated both in the exhibition and in the leaflet that they have done so.

The spate in October took the river to its highest level since 1966. A spokesman of the Forth River Purification Board says that, as areas have been built up (Wester Hailes and others) and the bypass constructed, the storm water draining into the river causes it to rise more rapidly and to a higher peak than formerly. (Contrary to what some of us thought, industrial usage is now slight and makes little difference to the flow.)

Several trees on Dean Bank Footpath fell across the river, apparently because their roots were undermined by the flood-water. This damaged the footpath (as has happened before). We are urging that measures be taken to protect this vulnerable stretch of the bank.

D.L.F.

WHERE DID THE LANE LEAD?

West Mill Lane is now well surfaced with granite setts (after we had made the Highways Department realise that it is a public road). It ends in a high double gate of iron, surmounted with a tangle of barbed wire. Beyond this a rough road winds between stone walls. Where to?

Some of our readers will remember Grove Cottage (or was it always called locally just "The Grove"?), for it was not demolished until after the Second World War, after having been boarded up since about 1914. (It was soon after that that the roadway to it was cut off by the iron gates). It has been described as a "substantial house" occupied in 1826 by the manager of East Binny Quarry, Robert Kerr, but when it was acquired in 1877 by the proprietors of Belgrave Crescent (along with the land on which their garden was created) it was already divided into four dwellings (and it remained so to the end). It was rather dilapidated, and repairs were necessary before the gardener could move in (to two rooms and an attic). However, it remained in a dilapidated state and demolition was discussed, but a condition in the few charter made this difficult. An offer to buy and turn it into a squash racquets court was turned down.

x by Nelson? (who built "orbiter" instead)

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Just beyond the iron gates you can see an opening in the wall to the left. This was the doorway of a cottage which was probably ruinous when the gardens were established and which was demolished at that time. (The ground on which the gardens were laid out is described in Grant's "Old and New Edinburgh" as covered with kitchen gardens, ruinous buildings and broken-down fences). On this doorway is carved a fylfot — a sort of swastika — which was a goodluck sign. There is another on a stone used as a step a few yards up into the gardens. This old doorway served as an entrance to the gardens at the time when the roadway to Grove Cottage was open. It was necessary to have an entrance there, if only for the gardener — probably only for the gardener, for there was no question then of any of the residents of the village having the enjoyment of the gardens.

Times have changed: our members are now invited to become key-holders. The current rate of subscription is £37, but for this you have the freedom of what is perhaps the best of all the New Town gardens, with its extensive lawns, herbaceous border, fine trees cyclamen blooming by woodland paths (in November!), sheltered places to sit on the south-facing slope....

Those who would like to see the gardens should apply to Dr Finlay, 7 Belgrave Crescent (332 6512) or to Mr Sanderson at No. 22 (332 1809).

There is access from Dean Path as well as from the Crescent. For security reasons it is unlikely that an entrance can be reopened at West Mill Lane. A pity, for beyond those forbidding gates the winding track leads down to a picnic site on a terrace above the river, where Grove Cottage used to stand. The site was cleared of scrub about ten years ago by some of the proprietors, who thus made more accessible a spot with a magnificent view of the West Mill and the weir, the Dean Bridge and the ruins of Lindsay's Mill on the opposite bank.

Had the garden proprietors any right to cut this off from the village? Probably they had, for they had certainly owned Grove Cottage since 1877, and not long afterwards they acquired from Lt-Col. Learmonth of Dean any residual rights he might have in the roadway leading to it.

(Most of this information comes from a booklet by Kenneth W. Sanderson: *The Centenary of Belgrave Crescent Gardens*, privately printed in 1977.)

and re-printed since obtainable from Lindsay's WS D.L.F.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday December 21 CHRISTMAS PARTY
2 Belford Road, at 7.30. Tickets (75p) from Ian Cowie (20 Well Court); Mrs Kirkwood (19 Well Court); Dorothy Forrester (13 Belford Road).

A change of venue, to the pleasant room of the Edinburgh Society of Musicians. A change of programme: entertainment and one game — "Pass the Parcel" (Everyone please bring one with a little present in it). If you need a lift up the hill, let Bill Balfour know. (36 Well Court, 226 3414).

Tuesday, January 26 THE DEAN VILLAGE — TWENTIETH-CENTURY CHANGES

Mrs Elma Munro. Dean Church Hall at 7.30.

Wednesday, February 10 BEER & SKITTLES
at the Sheep's Heid, Duddingston, leaving Damside in shared cars at 7 p.m. It's fun. No experience needed.

Tickets £1.50 (for skittles and food) from Ian Cowie (20 Well Court — 226 3984) by *February 7th.*

Tuesday March 23 THE SCOTTISH WILDLIFE TRUST (with slides)

with special reference to Lothian. C.P. Rawcliffe, Dean Church Hall at 7.30 p.m.

DEAN DIARY

“The Water of Leith”

We were all interested to see two cine films shown by Mr E.F. Catford entitled “The Water of Leith”. Many different aspects of the Water of Leith featured. It was particularly interesting to compare and contrast the Village now as it was twenty years ago. Views of a dilapidated West Mill and Burnside’s shop open for business are two examples of change.

* * *

Keep the Dean Clean

As in previous years a small band of merry persons met at the appointed time and place to remove rubbish from the Water of Leith. Effort was concentrated on the Weir where larger items had been carried there by the spate. More volunteers please for the next time.

It may be messy but it’s fun!

Thanks to all who helped this October.

* * *

Bonfire, Fireworks and Barbecue

“Remember, Remember the fifth of November”.

Yes! It was a night to remember. The focal point was provided by a spectacular bonfire which warmed the hearts of all gathered around. Hamburgers and hotdogs were consumed while admiring the colourful and varied firework display. A most welcome innovation was provided by our resident musicians Stuart Purdie and Nicol Maclaren on accordion and guitar. Scottish Country Dancing started spontaneously. Dancers and spectators joined in the fun. A great time was had by all. Thanks to Ian Cowie for co-ordinating the event, Adam Zyw for wood galore, Gail Clarke assisted by Frances McKail for catering, Stuart Purdie and Nicol Maclaren our musicians and Paul Harding for tickets and posters.

TREES

“The most common species of trees on the wooded Dean Bank, formerly part of the Dean Cemetery, are elm, lime, ash and sycamore. Unfortunately, Dutch Elm Disease has been recorded in the area and many of the elms are now under threat. However, careful replacement of diseased elms, together with natural regeneration, should ensure the continued existence of this attractive woodland”.

From the leaflet on the Dean Bank Footpath, published by Edinburgh Planning Department May 1977.

THE CHEERFUL CEMETERY

Lord Jeffrey wrote, a few weeks before his death in 1850, that he had taken a walk with his wife on a Sunday evening “under a beautiful setting sun. We went into the Dean Cemetery which was resonant with blackbirds and looked invitingly peaceful and cheerful. I rather think I must have a freehold there”. And there he was indeed buried, as was also a few years later, his great friend Lord Cockburn who wrote:

“The improving spirit of the age has evinced itself in nothing more agreeably than in the reformation of our last homes. The contrast between the loathsome town churchyards and the... spacious, pure and breezy cemeteries is creditable both to the taste and to the feelings of the age”. (Six such cemeteries had been established in the 1840’s — Warriston, Dean, Grange, Dalry, Newington and Rosebank).

The “Edinburgh Western Cemetery” was laid out in 1845 on the site and in the grounds of the old house of the Dean, which was demolished then. Some of its sculptured stones were built into the terrace wall of the cemetery. Another is over a window of the house on the end of the Dean Bridge.

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We can still, like Lord Jeffrey and his wife, enjoy a stroll through the Dean Cemetery. "How ghoulish!" said a friend on hearing I had done so. Not at all: in addition to the blackbirds, the trees and grass and shrubs, there is a fascinating collection of monuments which reflect the society of the New Town in the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. There are famous names — Jeffrey and Cockburn, the architect W.H. Playfair, the pioneer photographer David Octavius Hill. "Christopher North", Sam Bough... but also the less well known — doctors, lawyers, professors, artists, musicians, soldiers... The styles of the monuments range from the classical through the Victorian Gothic to Art Nouveau and more modern. Some are very fine.

A series of articles in the "Dean Village Association News" in 1973 amounts to a guided tour. Copies can be obtained from the Secretary for 25p the set.

D.L.F.

BIRDS

"The woodland supports many common bird species including dunnock, wren, blue tit, robin, blackbird, greenfinch and willow warbler. Kingfishers have occasionally been seen in the valley, and mallard duck and grey wagtail are common birds on the river and its banks during summer".

From leaflet on the Dean Bank Footpath, published by the Edinburgh Planning Department, May 1981.

"A dipper nests under the waterfall, while pied and grey wagtails skitter across the water chasing insects".

From pamphlet on Belgrave Crescent Gardens, by Kenneth W. Sanderson (1977)

Can anyone add to the list?

BACK DEAN

This old name has been revived and given to the enclave of new houses behind Ravelston Terrace, on land which had been since 1930 the nursery garden of Dean Cemetery. But, according to the Ordnance Survey of 1851, the name applied then to the stretch of road which is now Ravelston Terrace.

D.L.F.

GUIDES

The regulars who for years have taken groups round the Village, especially during the Festival, are always hoping we will recruit new guides to share in this activity, which, apart from being pleasant and interesting for all concerned, raises funds for the Association. Some members who would be willing think they don't know enough; arrangements are in hand to train them with the help of Mr Basil Skinner. People interested in joining this small group when it meets after the new year should contact the Secretary. Only two meetings at most and some reading are envisaged.

DEAN VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

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