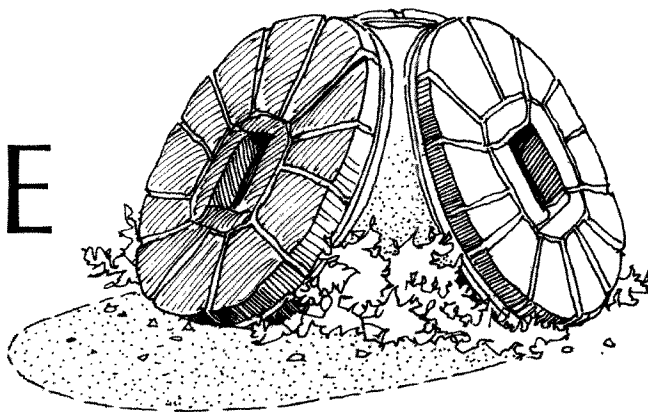


DEAN VILLAGE NEWS



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Issued free to members of the Association

MILLER ROW 1860 - 1960

In 1861, there were living in Miller Row four millers, three apprentice millers and a miller's loadsman. There was a grocer's shop to cater for the needs of their families. Ten years later, the millers had gone, their shop was vacant. There were, however, ten families living in the now sub-divided houses: one blacksmith, three carters, quarriers and widows. The rents ranged from £1. 10s to £4. 16s per year. The granaries called Easter Land and Jericho were vacant. What was needed then in the aftermath of milling was a new industry in Miller Row.

The man who came forward was James Johnston of Glenpatrick Distillery, Paisley. He bought all the property in Miller Row, and began, in 1882, the Dean Distillery. Johnston remained until 1903 when the distillery was taken over by Robert Barr, a Glasgow ironmaster, who lived in a fine house at West Calder. Barr turned the firm into a limited company in 1907. One of the shareholders was George Duncan who was the manager. Duncan was a well-known figure in Dean Village as he travelled from his home at 5 Ravelston Place to his office in Miller Row.

The First World War — and American Prohibition — had a disastrous effect on the whisky industry in Scotland. Lloyd George was reported as having said in a speech in 1915 that 'Drink is doing more damage than

all the German submarines'. Barr resigned in 1919; the Dean Distillery Co Ltd. went into liquidation in 1922 — marking the end of distilling in Miller Row.

Scottish Malt Distillers took over the bonded warehouse on Miller Row. The bond remained until the Second World War. Then the fear of bomb damage led to a government order in 1941 requiring all whisky to be removed from 'populous areas'. Several villagers remember the day in 1942 when the whisky was removed from the bond: this required the combined efforts of police, army, fire brigade and civilians. The whisky was, of course, never to return.

Fraser Neal (who had taken over the wig-hiring business of Wm. Mutrie in 1934) saw the possibilities of the granaries when he needed more space for his growing theatrical hire firm. Mutries moved to Dean Village in 1951, Neal taking up residence in Well Court. He was certainly a man of parts: he wrote scripts for pantomines, had acted before King George V and Queen Mary and set up the Fraser Neal Rep Players. The move to Dean Village coincided with a phenomenal expansion of the company, so great indeed, that they broke the London monopoly of costume hire. By 1954 Bell's Brae was described as 'the gateway to theatrical experience from John O Groat's to Land's End'. In 1955, Albert Mackie wrote that 'Mutries had 90,000

costumes and 2000 wigs and employed a staff of 120 and were still expanding?.

Disaster struck in the early hours of the 9th May, 1957. Mrs Mary Brash of Damside going to her work as a cleaner at Dean School saw a fire at Mutries and raised the alarm. Another lady ran in her nightdress to Well Court to alert Mr Neal. Although Neal's valuable collection of theatre books was saved, the entire stock of costumes, wigs and props was destroyed. In spite of Fraser Neal's statement to the press that the fire was a death-blow to Mutries, the firm did rise again — but not in Dean Village. Sadly, Neal himself was not to recover from the disaster and died within a year.

For the past 26 years the shell of the old granaries has remained by the riverside, the name of Mutrie still to be read over a doorway. The building is now the property of the architectural firm of Robert Matthew, Johnson-Marshall & Partners who have for the past ten years occupied the former coachhouse on Bell's Brae. The firm have plans to expand within the granary building. It is good that such an historic building should once again be used by industrious folk like architects who toil and sweat to make our world a more attractive place.

Elma Munro.

MILLER ROW NOW

Robert Matthew, Johnson-Marshall & Partners are now in a position to build their new offices. Only minor planning applications remain to be dealt with.

The Fire Master wants a widening of the entrance to Miller Row. The architect dealing with this has consulted the Association prior to the submission of a planning application. Two feet would be removed from the thickness of the wall on the side nearer the bridge. (The carved stones would not be affected). We are reluctant to see any change here, but would tolerate it if it is well done. We have suggested that a feature be made of the new corner, echoing the bollard-like character of the other corner, with a substantial capstone and a similar boulder at the base. (At last we've found a use for the spare one in Hawthornbank Lane.)

HIGH GREEN

The process of compulsory purchase of the steep roadway is nearly complete. Then the District Council can obtain a title and sell the whole site to McTaggart & Mickel as agreed. But the agreement is subject to outline planning permission being obtained. (This seems an odd situation: the District Council gets the money for the site only if the District Council grants planning permission!)

The architects are T.M. Gray & Associates. Of course the plans will be open to inspection and possible objection. We have approached McTaggart & Mickel, suggesting that early consultation with the DVA would be a good idea.

We hope that they will at least discuss with us the prospects for pedestrian access in both the long and short terms across the site, which extends right down to the river bank. They are expected to apply to the Highway Authority for a Road Closure Order for the duration of their operations, which are unlikely to start before late summer at the earliest, and which could go on for 2 years. We have already expressed concern about the possible closure of the route from the footbridge to Belford Road (See DVN No 71: The Stinking Brae). There seems little hope of keeping a pedestrian route open during the development, which will eliminate the present steep road and provide another, less steep, route for pedestrians, and for emergency vehicles to reach Hawthorn Buildings. The argument of danger to the public will probably win. But any attempt to close the riverside road between Hawthorn buildings and the footbridge would seem to be for the builders' convenience rather than for the safety of the public. It is not necessary to close the route for two years in order to construct a section of the Water of Leith Walkway there (which is one of the conditions imposed on the developer.)

ROOMS LARGE AND SMALL

are available for meetings, parties, weddings, concerts, music lessons or practice, in a fine building just off Queensferry Street, the premises of Edinburgh Society of Musicians. Contact Miss D. Forrester, 13 Belford Road (226 5843).

BELGRAVE CRESCENT GARDENS

It is surprising to discover that these gardens were not in the original plan of development: it had been intended that a second crescent be built, facing Belgrave Crescent, so that there would have been a pair of crescents, like Eglinton and Glencairn, Grosvenor and Lansdowne. But the first proprietors of Belgrave Crescent (which dates from 1874) valued their open view to Arthur's Seat, the Castle and the Pentland Hills. Their leader was Sir James Falshaw (the first Englishman to be elected Lord Provost of Edinburgh; his name was given to the bridge leading to the Stockbridge Colonies.) In 1877 they persuaded Lt-Col Alexander Learmonth of Dean to feu the ground to them as a pleasure garden instead.

The original purchase did not extend to Dean Path, but it did include Grove Cottage (beside the river between West Mill and the Dean Bridge as described in DVN No 67.) The gardener's free accommodation was two rooms and an attic in that house. It was not long before additional land was acquired, on the bank sloping down to Dean Path. The old cottages there were demolished, some of the stone being used to build a wall to seal off the gardens from Dean Path. One senses that in those days the proprietors wanted no contact with the village folk!

In recent years the wooded slopes have been opened up with new paths. In this part of the garden there are different varieties of Cyclamen (there were some in flower in every month of 1982). Ten thousand daffodils have been planted; these should be at their best when the gardens are for the first time opened to the public under Scotland's Gardens Scheme, on Sunday April 10.

That would give you an opportunity to visit the gardens before making up your mind to become a keyholder. Alternatively, you can ask Dr Finlay, at no 7 (332 6512) or Mr Sanderson at no 22 (332 1809) to let you see the gardens before committing yourself. An application to become a keyholder should be made to Lindsay's W.S., 1 Rothesay Terrace. The annual charge is £38.

From Lindsay's you can also obtain, at £1.50, the charming new edition of Kenneth Sanderson's history of the gardens. (This is also likely to be on sale when the gardens are open for charity on April 10.)

FROM NEW ZEALAND

We apologise for not passing on sooner greetings from Mrs Rebecca Dagger and her daughter Mrs Esson, in Dunedin. Last summer they sent their best wishes to friends and the folk interested in preserving the village. Mrs Dagger was very sorry to hear of the deaths of Babs and Bill Smith. She had known them all her life and liked the whole family. She asked us to pass on her kind regards and sincere sympathy to any of the relations still in the Village. "I can well imagine Bill and George Burns standing out for the rights of the playground; for we oldies it had many happy memories for all of us." A grandson was to come here last summer, but did not get in touch with your Secretary as expected. Did he contact anyone else?

CLEANING UP

As the local contribution to "Beautiful Britain 1983", there is being organised a clean-up of the entire length of the Water of Leith on Sunday 8th May, involving groups adjacent to the river and also from all over the City. The river will be divided up into manageable stretches of 50-100 yards and allocated to specific groups. We have of course said that the Dean Village Association will play a part.

The Committeè had previously decided that our own clean-up operation this spring would be not a big weekend affair as usual, but a more modest, more continuous one. It began in February. Do your bit whenever you feel like it. You can get plastic bags from Mrs Valentine, 31/2 Belford Road, Miss D. Forrester, 13 Belford Road or Mrs Kirkwood, 19 Well Court. We haven't asked for skips, but one or two bagfuls at a time can easily go out with the domestic rubbish.

The big once-a-year campaigns (or once in a few years) are all very well, but they don't **keep** the place clean. (Some of us feel that the most effective way to achieve this is to take a plastic carrier bag whenever one goes for a walk). However, this year's is called the "Keep Lothian Tidy Education Project" (and it is organised from Lothian Outdoor Education Centre in McDonald Road); and it is indeed more likely to make an impact on the careless members of the public than our own more low-key operation.

DEAN DIARY

The Christmas Party took place once again in Drumsheugh Toll, a very agreeable venue for a pleasant evening.

The Dean Bridge was the subject of a talk on February 1st by Roland Paxton, a senior engineer with the Highways Department of Lothian Region. He shared with us his passionate interest in the history of his profession as, with his slides, he told us the story of the building of the bridge, giving us a vivid impression of the genius of Thomas Telford, and took us on a tour through the bridge itself — for it is hollow, and it is possible to explore the internal structure. (Access is through manholes in the pavements. — not that we suggest you try to go in on your own!)

If you missed this occasion, you can get some of it in a chapter written by Mr Paxton in **Our Engineering Heritage: three notable examples in the Edinburgh area** (Dean Bridge, Leith Docks, Forth Road Bridge), published by the Institution of Civil Engineers (and obtainable for £1.50 post free from Maurice Williams, NSHEB, 16 Rothesay Terrace, Edinburgh 3). This contains the historical drawings but only one of the photographs of the interior. It does, however, contain a story which Mr Paxton refrained from quoting to us, on the grounds that it is apocryphal. But it's a good story: The contractor, John Gibb of Aberdeen, finished the bridge ahead of time. When the Road Trustees wished to take it over immediately, Gibb said "Na, na the briggie's mine ... until the time specified in the contract for its completion"; and he charged a penny for every foot passenger and wheel. (Quoted from **The Story of the Gibbs** by Lettice Milne Rae, 1961.)

Beer & Skittles (February 15). In the Sheep's Heid there's a plaque commemorating 100 years of skittle-playing there by the Trotters Club. The DVA has another 98 years to go. We'll probably go back next year, for we think it was inadequate publicity that led to rather few members coming for this enjoyable evening. (By the way, you don't have to drink beer if you don't like it.)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Garden Opening by the proprietors of Belgrave Crescent Gardens, in aid of charities. **Sunday April 10**, 2 p.m.-5.30 p.m. Enter from the Crescent.

Annual General Meeting of the Dean Village Association on **Monday April 25** in the Dragonara Hotel at 7.30 p.m. Speaker: Oliver Barratt, Secretary of the Cockburn Association.

Water of Leith Clean-Up on **Sunday May 8** (See "Cleaning up")

Morning Coffee in a Garden. **Saturday July 23 or 30.**

Guided Walks and Afternoon Teas. **Saturday August 20, 27, September 3.**

THE SCOTS MAGAZINE

will have in its May issue an article on the Water of Leith Walkway. A member of the DVA has provided some of the photographs, including a view of Well Court from what is perhaps the best viewpoint — a window at the back of the tenement in Belford Road.

SORRY, NO NEWS...

... **about the shop.** We hope that this means that the application for use as a bistro has been dropped.

... **about the playground,** where we'd like to see a garden. We are continuing our efforts to achieve this.

THE DEAN VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

Secretary: Miss Dorothy Forrester,
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Editor: c/o the Secretary.

Treasurer: Ian Cowie, 20 Well Court.

Subscriptions for 1983-4 are due after the AGM, when the rates may be changed.