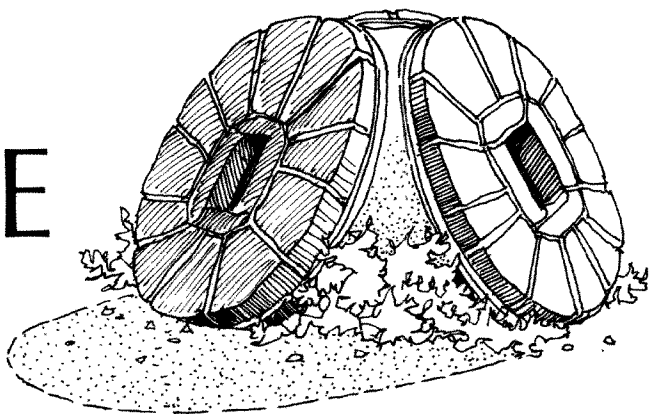


DEAN VILLAGE NEWS



No. 82 Autumn 1985

150 YEARS

On May 15, 1986, Dean Parish Church will celebrate its 150th anniversary.

In 1833 the Rev. Dr. Thomas Chalmers and his "Church Accommodation Committee" were concerned that there should be a church to serve the people of the Water of Leith Village and the surrounding area, which included the Dean Orphanage and John Watson's School. A missionary was appointed to labour among the people, "congregating the few who were disposed to hear him on the Sabbath, and carrying forth among them all his attentions and advices during the week." This appointment was made after a careful survey of the church connection of the people, which revealed that "of 1356 people who inhabited the Water of Leith Village only 143 had a right to sittings in places of worship of all denominations." So assiduous and successful was the missionary that we are told he had to transfer his public services to a larger place of meeting — an old malt granary capable, with great pressure, of accommodating 400 people, and which was generally filled to an overflow.

The church was built and opened in May 1836 with an eloquent sermon by Dr Thomas Chalmers. The second service that day was to be held in the afternoon but it was postponed to the evening because of an eclipse of the sun! The greatest amount of darkness caused by the moon's shadow was to be at 3 p.m. and it was thought this might incommode the minister and disturb the congregation.

The way was not easy for the new church. The Disruption, led by Dr Thomas Chalmers himself, took place in 1843. The minister and most of the congregation and the Dean Orphanage left it to form the Dean Free Church. By December 1844 these people had built a church for themselves at Lynedoch Place (1). In 1886, however, St Andrew's Free Church moved from George Street to Drumsheugh Gardens (2). The Dean Free congregation, finding them rather near, moved westwards and built a new church at Belford Bridge in 1889. In 1911 St Cuthbert's Free Church in Spittal Street united with them. The congregation therefore became known as St Cuthbert's Free until the Union of the Churches in 1929, when it became known as Belford Church. In 1970 it united with Palmerston Place. The empty Church still stands.

Meanwhile, thanks largely to the support of the Headmaster and Governors of John Watson's School, the parish church of Dean continued until the energetic and enthusiastic ministry of the Rev. James Williamson and the rapidly increasing population of the area made the building of a larger church necessary. In June 1898 it was unanimously decided to build a new church, which was opened for worship on May 30, 1903. All that remains of the old church is the stone with the carving of the bush that burned but was not consumed, which was above the gateway into the old church but is now embedded in the side wall of the new.

The years have passed with faithful

ministries and faithful people. It was thought that the 150th anniversary would be best celebrated by reflecting on this most interesting part of Edinburgh which has been the scene of the church's witness. On one evening a month from December to April, distinguished guests will therefore be speaking on the caring and educational establishments in the area as well as its industries and history. The very first speaker will be the world-wide authority on Dr Chalmers and Church Outreach in the 1830's, of which Dean Church was a part. On the Sundays following these Wednesday meetings, guest preachers will be dealing with relevant themes at the service. Do come and share in the celebrations. A very warm invitation is extended to you.

W. Thomas Webster

1. The site now vacant adjoining Drumsheugh Baths.
2. The site is now occupied by the office block, Meldrum House.
3. The font is now in the garden of Well Court. (See DVN 66).

EVENTS ARRANGED BY DEAN CHURCH

Saturday November 23 EXHIBITION: 150 YEARS — Period Costume, memorabilia ... Perhaps you could lend something! Contact Lawrence Walker, Bell's Mills House (332 2270) or Adam Scott, 5 Orchard Place (332 1663).

Morning Coffee 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. Afternoon Tea 2.00 p.m. - 4.00 p.m. Church Hall.

Wednesday December 4 THOMAS CHALMERS AND CHURCH EXTENSION DURING THE 1830's: Principal A.C. Cheyne, MA, BD, BLitt., of New College, Edinburgh. Church Hall, 7.30 p.m.

Sunday December 8 CHURCH OUTREACH: The Rev. Ian Doyle, MA, BD, PhD., at the morning service, 11 a.m.

Wednesday January 8 THE VILLAGE OF DEAN AND ITS SURROUNDINGS IN THE 19TH CENTURY: E.F. Catford. Church Hall, 7.30 p.m.

Sunday January 12 OUTREACH INTO THE WORLD: The Rev. Andrew R. Morton, MA, BD. at the morning service, 11 a.m.

HIGH GREEN ETC

At the eleventh hour McTaggart & Mickel decided not to build. They never completed the purchase from Edinburgh District Council of the area between "Lower Belford Road" and the river, from Hawthorn Buildings to the first wooden fence. (The ground from there to the gable of the tenement which includes the Post Office still belongs, we understand, to Messrs Morris & Steedman.) We assume that the District Council will sooner or later offer their ground again for sale to a developer, but we expect that several years will pass before any new projects gets off the ground (literally). What do we want in the meantime?

The Committee, after consultation with others, propose the following treatment:

The area should be allowed to remain more or less as a wilderness, with a feeling of the countryside. No additional trees should be planted; the willows at the ford should be reduced. The informal diagonal path might be improved a bit, with steps at the lower end. Some seating could be provided at the upper edge (post-office side); this would help to keep cars off. The use of any part of the site as a parking lot is unacceptable; we are asking that measures be taken to stop it. Incidentally, this would have the effect of pedestrianising almost completely "Lower Belford Road", and the steep brae. We are also urging the appropriate authority to go ahead with the proposed closure (to vehicles) of the road past 30-32 Belford Road.

The District Council will no doubt be reluctant to spend money on what they regard as a development site; but we are not asking for much: a small amount could preserve and enhance the visual quality of the area. We ourselves shall of course continue to defend it against litter louts and dumpers. (We had a collection of bathroom equipment removed recently.)

What do you think of those proposals? Comments please, to committee members, or letters to the Editor (c/o Secretary).

Convening Court

The Association has for 5 years been begging the Highways Department to renovate this potentially charming byway. We now have a promise that it will be paved in natural stone (when money is available ...)

The School

As reported in DVN 81, James Potter Construction have a Building Control Warrant for internal alterations, but their application for planning consent is still pending. We have been refused permission to send a deputation to the Planning Committee when the matter comes up again, but we can fill the public benches even though we must not speak.

The playground

We have reminded District Council officials that residents asked for some sort of a garden at the Damside/Dean Path corner — at least a few seats and shrubs in tubs.

Planting

Contributions for trees and other planting have amounted to about £150. The tubs on the west side of Well Court will be planted shortly. Some new tubs will be provided in Well Court. Aconite bulbs will be planted on Dean Bank, and we shall probably sow seeds of meadow flowers on High Green.

Lights

A Meeting has taken place with senior officials of the Highways Department (Lothian Region). The present street lights in the historic core of the Village are likely to be replaced in about two years time. Most people dislike the orange light given out by low-pressure sodium lamps. For white light much more electricity is needed, but high-pressure sodium, as in Queen Street, gives a quite pleasant golden light. As for the fittings, a design outside the range normally used would be very much more expensive, and we would be asked to contribute the extra money. The cost of installing such lamps throughout the Village seems beyond what we could hope to raise; but we have agreed in principle to pay the extra for four Victorian-style "gas lamps" in Well Court. We have two or three years to raise the money (very roughly estimated at about £600) — time to hold a few ceilidhs in Well Court itself.

WATER OF LEITH WALKWAY

At the Tannery Site: We have seen an outline plan for a path close to the river from the iron footbridge (where some of Smart's new

railings will be removed) to Dean Bank. One will get past the weir by means of a "stepped ramp" on the outer side of the concrete retaining wall. With the Cockburn Association we have asked to see more detailed plans. An official letter says "The Walkway will be constructed in 1986 if everything goes according to plan". To judge by experience, this is a big "if".

St Bernard's Path: The improvements planned for the stretch from Stockbridge to the Dean Bridge are being delayed by the financial situation of the District Council. Plans for Miller Row are less advanced. We are trying to ensure that steps be taken at once at least to prevent cars from being parked in the area around the millstones when the contractors leave the site; but we — and the manager of the Oxylitre works — want a complete solution to the problem of uncontrolled parking there.

Bell's Mills to Roseburn: Unofficially, it is already possible to walk through to Wester Coates or Roseburn Cliff; and there will be an access from the junction of Douglas Crescent and Magdala Crescent.

MEMORIES

I was born at 34 Damside, Leggets Land, on 5th June 1902, and baptised in St Mary's Cathedral, Palmerston Place. My Godmother, Miss Stafford, lived opposite the Cathedral and ran a Lads' Club on Fridays and Bible Classes on Sunday afternoons. I attended Dean School and used to go to the Mission Hall at the bottom of Bell's Brae and the Band of Hope in Well Court.

On my visits to Edinburgh the first thing I do is to make my way to the Dean, it holds so many childhood memories for me. One of them was going to St Bernard's Well with an empty lemonade bottle to get a refill of mineral water for a penny. It's nice to see the Old Mill Building put to use after standing empty for years. Now there are new buildings on the Old Tannery Site but I can remember the days when lorry loads of dripping skins, drawn by trace horses, used to make their way up the Bell's Brae, many of which used to slip on the old cobbles. David Smith used to be a driver, he had a sister called Jessie, and they lived in Well Court. There was a cottage

between the bottom of Dean Path and Damside adjoining Dean Path Buildings. The boy who lived there was David Plane. There were two shops at the bottom of Dean Path; Annie Bailie used to sell paraffin oil in one of them and she was well known in the village. The agent for Leggets was Mr Hogg, who bought the land and was our landlord.

It's nice to see the old letter-box still embedded in the wall in Dean Path coming from Convening Court which must be two hundred years old.

When I was 12 years old I went to Gilmour School. (Later called Darroch. Ed.) My first job was taking Mr Crichton's dinner up to the Cab Stand, Belford, for sixpence a week. I worked for the SMT and from there joined the Scots Guards and served in China. I was on duty at all of the Palaces, trooping the colour and night guard at the Bank of England.

The Dean is a very special place for me and I shall always feel that the Dean belongs to me.

J.C. Fraser
*P.S. by telephone from London: He remembers that the horse-drawn post-office vans were kept at Sunbury.

THE VILLAGES OF EDINBURGH

by Malcolm Cant. Volume 1 will be out in November.

It covers Corstorphine, Cramond, Davidson's Mains, Dean, Duddingston, Newcraighall, Newhaven, Restalrig and Stockbridge, telling the story of each village from its origins to the present day.

Published by John Donald, Edinburgh. Paperback £5.95.

Limited edition, signed, cloth, £12.00.

Copies will be on sale at our meeting on November 29, and from Mrs Valentine.

DVA EVENTS

We hope that members will understand that the meetings on October 1 and 15 are special ones for invited groups. We are grateful to Mr Roland Wedgwood for allowing us to use Well Court Hall on these occasions.

Tuesday October 1: MEMORIES: A recording session for people who knew the Village 50 and more years ago. Well Court Hall, at 7 p.m. Not open to **all** members, but committee members welcome.

Tuesday October 15: WELL COURT: for proprietors and tenants. Well Court Hall, 7.30 p.m. Not open to **all** members, but committee members welcome.

Saturday October 26: CLEAN-UP Volunteers please! Consult the notice-board to find out just where the gang will be meeting, in the morning at 10 a.m. and the afternoon at 2 p.m.; or phone Mrs Valentine or Mike Lawton. If Saturday's weather is terrible come on Sunday.

Wednesday October 30: "WEST SIDE STORY", a tour up the west coast of Scotland. **John Foster**, CBE, FRICS, FRTP, RIBA, ARIAS, FRSA, until recently Director of the Countryside Commission for Scotland. Dean Church Hall, 7.30 p.m.

Saturday November 2: FIREWORKS AND BONFIRE 7 p.m.
£1 (50p for kids) including hot soup.

Tuesday November 26: GREENLAND Douglas Lachie, with slides. Dean Church Hall at 7.30 p.m.

Tuesday January 28: to be announced.

THE DEAN VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

Chairman: Mrs Peggy Valentine
31/2 Belford Road (225 8942)

Secretary: Miss Dorothy Forrester
13 Belford Road EH4 3BL (226 5843)

Treasurer: Mr Michael Lawton
28/1 Belford Road (226 5197)

The Secretary will be abroad October 26 - December 7. Mrs Valentine will deal with her mail.

SUBSCRIPTIONS (1985-6)

Ordinary £2.00 (or £2.50 with postage)
Senior Citizens £1 (or £1.50 with postage)
Life Membership £20