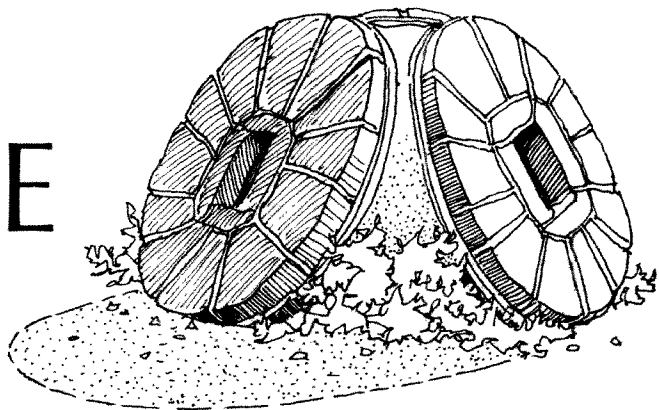


DEAN VILLAGE NEWS



No. 87 Winter/Spring 1987

WHAT IS TO BECOME OF WELL COURT?

We have had no constructive response to the article in DVN 86. It seems that there has been a compulsory repair order for one section. This has caused annoyance, but perhaps it is the only way?

ROOTS — WEIRS

We have had an enquiry about the Weir family, of whom there is a numerous branch in New Zealand. Mrs Jean Dales of 9 Kare Street, Raumati South, New Zealand, would like to contact descendents of Hugh, Robert or Joseph Weir, who remained "at the Water of Leith" when their brother Daniel, Mrs Dales' great-grandfather, emigrated in 1848.

Mrs Dales has already done a considerable amount of research, which sheds an interesting light on the social history of the Village in the 19th century.

Daniel's parents, Cochrane Weir (1796-1865) and Sarah Kerr, were born in Ireland. Their Scottish names and the Protestant affiliations of their descendents suggest that they were Ulster Scots. They must have come to Scotland soon after 1816, for only their first child was born in Ireland (at about that date), the other eight in Edinburgh.

In the 1941 census Cochrane Weir is recorded as an agricultural labourer living at

Bell's Mills. In the same year a grandson, another Cochrane Weir, was born to Daniel Weir and his wife Catherine Graham, "at Bell's Mills, east of bridge" — presumably on the site of the modern Sunbury Place. In 1848 this young couple emigrated to New Zealand with 6-year-old Cochrane and two other sons. They were in the Free Church contingent who settled in the Otago district and founded Dunedin; it was led by Dr Thomas Burns, a nephew of the poet.

There are very many descendents of Daniel Weir in New Zealand: he had 12 sons by his two wives. His son Cochrane Weir the second also married twice and he had even more children.

But there were still Weirs in Scotland: Daniel left behind 2 sisters and 6 brothers, including Hugh, Robert and Joseph. When old Cochrane Weir died in 1865 he was living at Damside. He and his wife were buried in unmarked graves in St. Cuthbert's Churchyard. (Working-class folk were not buried in the Dean Cemetery). Houses beside the mill-lade (the "dam") do not seem to have been numbered until later. In 1883 Margaret Brown of 38 Damside married John Weir of 21 Dean Path (site of Dean Path Buildings); a Joseph Weir was born at 40 Damside in 1889; in 1890 Jessie Stewart Weir of 42 Damside married James McIntosh.

Does anyone know what became of those Weirs and McIntoshes? Write to Mrs Dales or contact the Secretary.

LANDSCAPING AND THE WALKWAY

Since High Green is unlikely to be built on in the next few years (and we hope it never will), we have been urging that a little landscaping be done, to make it into "a cared-for wilderness", rather than a dump (See DVN 82, 83, 84). We might have had to wait a long time for the District Council to fund even a small amount of work, but last summer Voluntary and Community Services (Lothian) asked if we had a job for them to do (funded by the Manpower Services Commission).

A plan has been drawn up by Miss Lindsay Guthrie of the Planning Department in consultation with Adam Zyw. Footpaths, seats facing the view, a site for bonfires. The old walls would be kept but stabilised, and reduced in height alongside "Lower Belford Road" (We'll see that the stone dated 1670 is preserved). What about a pub by the footbridge? No thankyou, not even if it were controlled by the Dean Village Association. A playground there? Even people living very near said "yes". (It may have a sculpture for clambering on rather than swings). Few new trees, but some hawthorns (of course); rough grassy areas (with wild flowers, one hopes). Can anything be done about dogs? (or for dogs?).

It may be possible to close the roadways to motor vehicles as part of this amenity scheme. We certainly want the eastern branch of "Lower Belford Road" to be pedestrianised. Most of the cars entering the area have been coming for illegal parking, on the road or off it; that has been almost entirely stopped by the deliberate placing of stones. We had asked for boulders, which would have looked better. If the landscaping plan goes through, a better solution will be found. (You may have been confused by the further lorry loads of stones which arrived soon afterwards, to be transported across the river for the construction of the Walkway upstream of the footbridge).

High Green belongs to the Housing Department of the District Council, who might still sell it to a private builder. So we need the permission of the Housing Committee, who would worry about cost. They would have nothing to pay for the initial landscaping; but what about maintenance? In the hope that this will help a decision in favour of the scheme, the Association has undertaken to maintain the vegetation, on the understand-

ing that it will be of a low-maintenance type. (Cutting twice a year with a Flymo by one or two willing members, or hired labour if necessary).

At our meeting on December 9th members were able to see and comment upon this plan for High Green and also the plans for two sections of the Walkway.

Work has begun on the path which is to follow the river upstream from the footbridge to join Dean Bank Footpath, which is reached at present from Dean Path. As was always intended, there is to be an access to the new path from the footbridge as well as through the pend, but there is going to be a clumsy ramp, since Smart's altered the river bank considerably. Another ramp will negotiate the change of level at the weir.

In Miller Row welcome improvements are to be made, including a seating area round the millstones. Downstream, St Bernard's Path, leading to Stockbridge, is being repaired. Those trees which have been undermining the path are being removed. We do not think that anyone will object to that, for there are too many trees between the path and the river; indeed we are asking that at least one more be felled, in the immediate vicinity of St Bernard's Well, which is badly obscured in the summer.

PARKING REGULATIONS

The amendments which we described in DVN 83 are likely to be advertised to the public (for possible objection) about March. Zones 1 and 5 will each be divided into two. A few more spaces for residents will be provided in Dean Path, Belford Road and Randolph Crescent.

Sunbury Place and Sunbury Mews have until now been private streets, so that it had not previously been possible to apply the parking controls there. But they will probably be adopted by the Regional Council at the beginning of February. The DVA has ensured that, in accordance with the wishes of the residents, they would be included in the new Order. Sunbury Place will be a numbered mews-type parking are, with no painted lines. In Sunbury Mews some ordinary zone 5 parking places will be provided.

(We have pointed out to the Highways Department that there is a need for some "give way" markings at the Sunbury junction with Belford Road).

LETTER

Dear Miss Forrester,

I write to you regarding the proposed extension at the Dragonara Hotel. This I feel would be a major improvement to the area which is presently little short of a dump. The hotel itself is a vast improvement on the Renault garage which previously occupied the site. They have shown themselves to be good neighbours by the standard of maintenance to their gardens and grounds — and the bottle bank reflects their concern for the environment.

The Dean Village has always been a working area — the DVA appears to show no appreciation of the jobs that would be created — both directly and indirectly. To say nothing of the increased utilisation of the area by guests/visitors to the hotel. Come on let us share this attractive part of the world with our fellow beings and stop being “dog in the manger” about anything and everything that looks like progress.

E.B. Hepburn

DEVELOPMENTS AND PLANNING

Dragonara Hotel — proposed extension: It is disappointing that the Transportation Committee of the Regional Council has made no objection on traffic grounds; but the real decision rests with the Planning Committee of the District Council.

Office Block at Belford Road/Bell's Brae: Planning consent has been given subject to the condition that the vehicle access from Bell's Brae be re-designed as a narrower, single opening. (That is a slight improvement, but the building is still too bulky, and weakly designed).

Belford Church: Anxious neighbours planning consent, for which no application has yet been made. When it is, the fact will be advertised in the press and by a notice at the building. It is rumoured that there might be a basement car park entered from Douglas Gardens Mews, a private street. The proprietors may have the right to prevent that.

National Gallery of Modern Art: A long-term landscape plan has been prepared by Rosalyn Guard, senior landscape architect at Robert

Matthew, Johnson-Marshall & Partners, and submitted to the District Council for planning consent. Behind the main building there would be a sculpture court and a restaurant terrace. Beyond the wall of the car park there is a steep wooded bank extending to the river which at that point — just above the weir for Bell's Mills — runs almost parallel to the Gallery. It is planned to make footpaths converging on a new footbridge which would connect to the Walkway, giving a rural approach to the Gallery from Roseburn, Wester Coates and the Dragonara Hotel.

45-49 Belford Road: Miller Construction (not Miller Homes) will begin work in February on a block of 26 flats, designed by Morris and Steedman.

MEMORIES

Excerpts from recordings made in Well Court Hall on October 1 1985.

Animals:

“It was nothing to see the Dean Bridge between 8 and 9 o'clock in the morning and great flocks of sheep walking across; and sometimes they came through the Village from different farms round about They used to say they were going to the meat market It was fascinating to watch them”

“The bubbly-jocks? They were up in Sunbury They used to come up one of the lanes to the top of the road just beside the shops. It was a funny sight to see them all standing there looking at the people and the people looking at them They used to fatten them up for Christmas, I suppose, and sell them. I think it was the Frasers that had them, but I'm not sure.”

Beside Bell's Brae. (Jack & Renwick had what is now Cobb Blyth's office). “There used to be a goat tethered on that grassy area between Jack and Renwick's and the mod cons up the hill there. It was one of the dares — if you could go and run the gauntlet of the goat and if you slipped in inclement weather the goat got there first”

“They were tethered on what we called the Granny Hill. It's a little nursery-like place now in front of that office.” (I have also heard it called Goat Green. Ed.)

ALLOTMENTS

The DVA's tenancy of land at the Dean Education Centre is continued for another year. Anyone hoping for a plot should apply to Bill Myles, 12 Douglas Crescent (337 4781) or Harry Wilson, 1 Ravelston Place (332 2601). But there is a waiting list.

NATURE NOTES

From the newsletter for Douglas Crescent Gardens: In 1986 sparrow-hawks nested successfully nearby, rearing three chicks, and were frequently seen quartering the tree-tops close to the river banks. There are nesting boxes for owls in the Gardens and at Donaldson's Hospital, but it is not certain that they were used. Down at the river dippers are seen regularly, a kingfisher on October 6.

Some one has asked: "Where do kingfishers go in the winter"? The RSPB's journal "Birds" gave the answer: Not far — they go to the coast if the streams freeze completely. There was a probable sighting of one close to the iron footbridge in the Village in November. Keep looking!

But in 1985 two were found dead, probably killed by mink. Kenneth Sanderson suggests that mink may also be responsible for the mallard's failure to breed, for the last two years, at the foot of Belgrave Crescent Gardens. Last year he saw three young mink there, in their dirty white coats.

ANY OLD BEDS ETC

If your spare furniture is still usable, North Edinburgh Action Group will pick it up and sell it for funds for help the mentally handicapped and their families. Phone 661 9500 between 9 and 5, Monday to Friday.

If it's just junk, phone the Cleansing Department's Special Uplift service (228 2292).

In November some one had done neither: there was an exceptional amount of dumping on open ground in the Village. Fortunately we had an exceptionally large number of volunteers for our clean-up in early December. Very many thanks to them. Such was their willingness, energy and agility that we were also able to clear two or three years of accumulated rubbish below the weir at West Mill.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

These are held in a room in the heart of the Village lent to us through the generosity of Robert Matthew, Johnson-Marshall & Partners. It is entered from Miller Row, a few yards down the riverside from the old stone bridge. The charge of 20p includes tea and biscuits. Time 7.30 p.m.

Tuesday February 3

THINGS THAT GRANNY KNEW

Graeme Cruickshank, of Huntly House Museum, comes to us with the reputation of being an excellent speaker.

Would you like to bring along an object that **your** granny knew?

Tuesday March 3 Kenneth Sanderson

A NATURALIST IN SPAIN

Our wandering ornithologist has already delighted fellow members of the Association with his slides from Kenya and India.

Wednesday April 1 Another favourite returns; Stanley Jamieson.

Last time his subject was Edinburgh's coastline, this time **EDINBURGH'S OPEN SPACES**.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

At the end of April. We hope to hold it in a new and very interesting venue. An announcement will be sent to members, and posted up.

New committee: We would like to have representatives from West Mill, Sunbury and the allotment-holders.

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: Mrs Betty Boyd
10 Randolph Cliff (225 3289)

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Ordinary £2.00 (or £2.50 with postage)
Senior Citizens £1 (or £1.50 with postage)
Life Membership £20.00