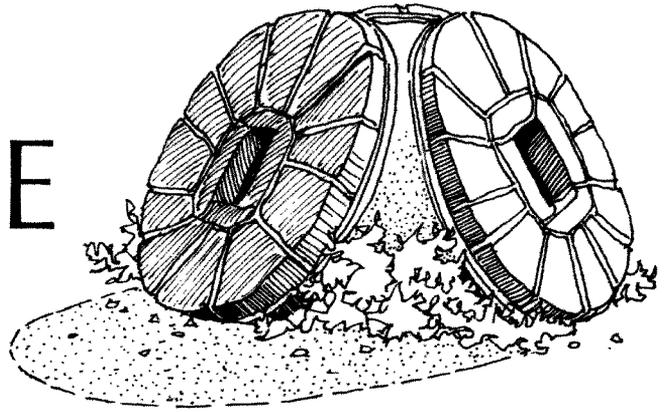


DEAN VILLAGE NEWS



No.90

Winter/Spring 1988

DEVELOPMENT OF HIGH GREEN

As forecast in our last issue, plans have been submitted to the District Council by New Capital and Scottish Properties (architects: Yeoman McAllister). Owing to their generosity in supplying us with copies of the plans we were able to exhibit them in the Village on December 15 and 16. (This was announced by posters and leaflets).

Here in italics is a selection of the comments written down by the people who came to the exhibition.

There has already been more than enough development and alteration to the character of the Dean Village.

I feel it would be in the best interests of the village if the ground were kept as green space.

A green lung of the city would be lost. It takes away a green countryish bit of land.

We argued that case forcefully but unsuccessfully last year. The land has been zoned for housing for many years and the District Council is determined to sell it.

It will take the only possible space for greenery left in the village, if the development is too large.

We can still argue the case for a smaller development, which could leave a green space. The Council's own Planning Brief recommended a density which implied fewer than 20 dwellings. The present plan has 43 dwellings and an office. We have heard that

the developers say they need to put in a restaurant or an office in order to make the scheme pay. Some other contenders for the site considered that they could make enough profit from fewer than 43 flats.

You may as well say goodbye to the Dean Village: greed has taken over. If buildings must be erected, cottage style would be more appropriate.

An early post-war plan for council housing was of that character, but it is probably unrealistic to hope for that now.

What about shops?

The cost of building a shop would be so great that a very high rent would have to be charged, and we have seen that there was no effective demand from shopkeepers wanting to rent existing shops on Belford Road.

There are no facilities for children to play or personally owned space beyond each owner's front door. Have we not learnt any lessons from the 60's? Remove the block on Hawthornbank Lane.

That would give more space for play, but it would probably not be enough to open up the view from Belford Road. The blocking of this view, in contravention of one of the principles of the Planning Brief, was the subject of many adverse comments. We are studying this question very carefully so that we can show to what extent the view would be impaired.

The design should ensure that car parking

is controlled - particularly in Hawthornbank Lane - part of the Water of Leith Walkway. It is intended that it should become a private road, for emergency vehicles only, with a right of way for pedestrians of course; but we fear that it could become cluttered with cars belonging to the new residents and office workers, and the parking wardens would have no power to prevent this.

Destruction of ancient road. What happens to the setts?

The "Stinking Brae" - too steep for emergency vehicles - will have to be modified, but setts will be laid in that part of Hawthornbank Lane where at present there is only concrete.

An architectural muddle: pseudovernacular skyline, timbered gables, small-paned windows and patio doors, with the currently modish X balconies.

A silly design, but not too bad if details were improved, and particularly if a few more family houses were included.

I approve of the style of the development and the type of accommodation offered. I also approve of the covered parking. However, I consider the development is somewhat too dense for a restricted site. I could be much happier with a version scaled down by 20% or so.

It destroys the only climbing facility in the centre of town. Really? Belford Road will still have a retaining wall!

We have urged individuals to send their personal comments to the Director of Planning, whether they live in the Village or not. This is a matter of concern to all who value the picturesque corners of our city.

The Association's submission will concentrate mainly on the density and the loss of view - two matters which are of course inter-related.

The Dean Village is one of Edinburgh's gems Edinburgh will destroy itself when every open space gets built over.

* * * * *

I'm going to stop calling the Dean Village a village until it has a pub. Oliver Barratt

Poster Design

Some one out there must be able to do better than me. Please volunteer!

HONOURS

There were at least three names of particular interest to us in the New Year Honours List:

Basil Skinner receives the OBE. He is Director of the Department of Extra-Mural Studies at the University of Edinburgh, and a founder of the Dean Village Association, of course!

There are knighthoods for

H. Anthony Wheeler, architect, President of the Royal Scottish Academy, and for

Ian T. Campbell, Councillor for Dean Ward on Edinburgh District Council. He was recently appointed finance director of the Scottish Conservative Party, for which he has been a leading fund-raiser for several years.

THE BABY BOOM CONTINUES

We congratulate Jenny and Adm Zyw on the birth of twin sons, David Reuben and Thomas Aleksander. We look forward to seeing them grow up in the Village, as their father did.

A WALL

We reported the dangerous condition of the old wall between High Green and "Lower Belford Road", where large stones threatened to fall on reckless children or innocent passers-by. We suggested it should be lowered. We didn't expect that to be done by a bull-dozer. We were told that the wall, when lowered, would be "pointed up", but we assume that nothing will be done as long as there is the prospect of an early development of the site.

TAXI

As a free service for old people, a taxi leaves Damside for the West End on Tuesdays at 10 a.m. The Wednesday run - no longer used - has been cancelled, but, since we no longer have a complete grocery service in Queensferry Street, the Committee has considered the possibility of providing transport to and from the Safeway supermarket in Comely Bank, and perhaps also to Stockbridge. Any comments?

RLS's DEAN VILLAGE

This phrase was used in a member's comment on the plans for High Green. It prompted an enquiry about what Robert Louis Stevenson had written about the Dean Village.

In "Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes" Chapter VI he described "the superposition of one rank of society over another" at the Dean Bridge. "Over this, every afternoon, private carriages go spinning by, and ladies with card-cases pass to and fro about the duties of society. And yet down below you may still see, with its mills and foaming weir, the little rural village of Dean", where "the dusty miller comes to his door, looks at the gurgling water, hearkens to the turning wheel and the birds about the shed, and perhaps whistles an air of his own to enrich the symphony – for all the world as if Edinburgh were still the old Edinburgh on the Castle Hill, and Dean were still the quietest of hamlets buried a mile or so in the green country".

In the early chapters of "Catriona", the heroine is living in the house of Mrs Drummond-Ogilvy of Allardyce "beyond the village of Dean, on the north side of the water." (end of Chapter I). In Chapter VII David Balfour, "in the village of Dean, where it sits in the bottom of a glen beside the river, enquired his way of a miller's man, who sent him up the hill upon the further side by a plain path, and so to a decent-like small house in a garden of lawns and apple trees," and he "stepped inside the garden hedge", where he "came face to face with a grim and fierce old lady, walking there in a white mutch with a man's hat strapped upon the top of it."

It is evident that Mistress Ogilvy is not living in a cottage in the village itself. It has been suggested to me that her house was Grove Cottage, a little villa whose foundations are at the riverside downstream from West Mill (See "Where does the lane lead" in DVN 67): but David Balfour was directed up the hill. I think the house was on the site of Belgrave Crescent Gardens, which were laid out after 1877. Stevenson, born in 1850 and living in Heriot Row from 1857,

must have known this area as it was described by Grant in "Old and New Edinburgh", covered with kitchen gardens, ruinous buildings and broken-down fences. No doubt it was one of these ruins that he visualised as having been in the 1750's Mistress Drummond-Ogilvy's decent-like small house in its neat garden, where, after a skirmish with the formidable chaperone, he spoke with Catriona.

Does any reader know of other references in Stevenson's writings? D.L.F.

SHOPS

Have you found the shop at the foot of Dean Path which has been taken over by Howieson the baker of Broxburn? (Until recently this inconspicuous building facing the side wall of West Mill was used as an insurance office.)

We wish success to the Manageress, Miss Fay Williams, who is providing a very useful service, particularly valuable for those who don't get about very easily. And to ensure that the shop survives, will the rest of you patronise it too? As well as bread, scones, cakes, filled rolls, hot pies etc, she sells fresh farm eggs, milk, tea, sugar, instant coffee, and marmalade, and this range may be extended.

As for the building in Damside, which belongs to Smart's and where they are using the shop as a sales office, we are trying to ensure that it will have a future. Mr Smart's intention has been to demolish it and landscape the site, but we have succeeded in interesting another party in the possibility of restoring it. It is not "listed", but, being in a Conservation Area it cannot be demolished without consent – unless it should be declared dangerous.

We feared that the Post Office in Belford Road might be closed after the departure of David Greenan, but it has been taken over by Mr Michael Gilmartin.

Players please

Will you let a member of the Committee know who, in our community, can play a musical instrument?

OTHER PLANNING APPLICATIONS ETC.

Belford Church: Consent has been granted for a change of use to offices, subject to the conditions that

(1) a fully detailed application shall be submitted in respect of the proposed alterations to the building

(2) not more than 5 vehicles shall be parked within the property at any one time.

The proposal had indicated 9 car spaces in a basement below street level. Access for this was to be made from Douglas Gardens Mews.

Holy Trinity Church (on Dean Bridge): The application to make of it an art gallery, restaurant and offices is still under consideration.

Dragonara Hotel. The hotel is now owned by Hilton International. In January work began on the creation of a Business Centre in what were the function rooms. The Manager, Mr Martin Hicks, says that this should lead to a reduction in the noise which was annoying local residents. As for the major development for which planning consent was granted, this will go ahead some time, but not in the immediate future.

Belford Road/Bell's Brae: Consent was given at the end of 1986 to Walker Contracts (Scotland) Ltd for the erection of an office block between Drumsheugh Baths and Drumsheugh Toll. Recent drilling has revealed problems for the foundations. If these can be resolved, work will begin in the spring.

CONVENING COURT

We rejoiced that this long neglected but potentially attractive by-way was at last going to be re-paved, and in natural stone, for which the District Council gave a special grant to the Highways Department of Lothian Region. We were amazed to find that only part of it was being paved. We fear that when the rest of it is done, possibly by Smart's, an inferior material will be used. We are looking into this.

DIARY

Tuesday, January 19 at 7.30

THE ROYAL BLIND ASYLUM & SCHOOL

James R.S. Fraser

in the Seminar Room of Robert Matthew, Johnson-Marshall & Partners, Miller Row.

Tuesday, February 16 at 7.30

URBAN WILDLIFE

Hew Currie, Lothian Urban Wildlife Group,
in the Seminar Room, Miller Row, as on January 19.

Tuesday, March 15 at 7.30

LET'S CHAT

over a glass of wine and a titbit or two, in Drumsheugh Toll, 2 Belford Road (The Edinburgh Society of Musicians). Tickets £2, from any member of the Committee.

There will be an EXHIBITION of PHOTOGRAPHS of Dean Village by Bjorgvin Palsson, on sale at £10.

Wednesday, March 30 7.30 p.m.

GOLD OF THE PHARAOHS

at the City Art Centre, Market Street.

A pre-booked group will get in without queuing. If you wish to come, contact Peggy Valentine or Dorothy Forrester, and pay in advance (65p for pensioners, £1 for others).

End of April AGM to be announced.

Tuesday, May 10 (evening)

WINDOW BOXES

at Mortonhall Garden Centre.

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)