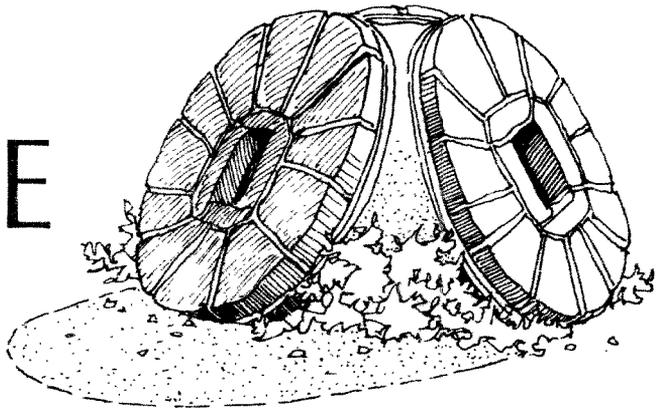


DEAN VILLAGE NEWS



No.92

Autumn 1988

THE LORD ADVOCATE REMEMBERS

I start, without apology, on a personal note. By upbringing I am I suppose a "Stockbridge boy", though maturer years brought me to Belford, so that my relationship to the Dean Village may be described as cousinly - a kind of adjacency rather than consanguinity, in the bloodline.

As a child, my earliest recollection is that of rising on tiptoe - probably with adult help - to peer over the spikes on the parapet of the Dean Bridge and gaze at the gorge and roofs below. This was the little rural village of Dean which Robert Louis Stevenson described more vividly in his picturesque notes on Edinburgh. ¹ A view too which re-appears in *Catriona*, which derived from Stevenson's ² wanderings with Charles Baxter between the Dean and Silvermills.

When I was a boy, Holy Trinity was a church - and how good to think it is to be one again - attended on Sundays by files of Fettes boys dressed in Eton collars, tail-coats and top hats.

I recollect also walking beyond Orchard Brae to stand on a metal plate for a water hydrant sign to look over the stone dyke at the fields which bordered the north side of the road opposite Daniel Stewart's, that wall

which was interrupted only by the inconsequent set of houses, part obviously of a terrace never completed, which was pulled down after the last war.

As an older child I would, in a spirit of adventure, go up the path beyond the end of Saunders Street which goes past St Bernard's Well - always avoiding India Place because we fought battles against the boys there - "keelies" we called them, little knowing its Gaelic derivation in the word "ghillie" - I can still feel that frisson of fear as we approached the bridge at McKenzie Place apprehensive of ambush down the steps there. On we would go up the river - then dammed at Saunders Street for water for the static tank, against expected German air-raid - under the Dean Bridge (great place for echo), the old squash court (Oxylitre) ³ and along the side of the old granary building ⁴ there at the corner where the millstones were piled, was the secret place known to us children alone as "the foxes' hole". Occasionally we would press on behind the Drumsheugh Baths to the footbridge below Sunbury where there was such a comfortable feeling in the thud of leather on echoing wood as we tramped over it and back.

M.V. GARDYLOO

The smell from the tannery did not concern us - anyone who went to school along "Stinky Lane" as East and West Silvermills Lanes were known to generations of Academy boys, would have remained unmoved by that in the Dean Village.

On other occasions, after swimming at Drumsheugh Baths, I would gaze down the steps at their side, before deciding to return home by the safer high road round Randolph Crescent, past the church building ⁵. next to the baths, black and rather unfriendly red bricks and tiles of the baths.

(From the address given by Lord Cameron of Lochbroom at the AGM of the Dean Village Association, April 19, 1988)

Notes: 1. See DVN 74

2. See DVN 90

3. See DVN 68

4. Built 1619, known to more local boys as "Jericho"; occupied by Mutrie's until the spectacular fire in 1957 (See DVN 72); now replaced by RMJ-M's offices.

5. The original Dean Free Church of 1844, later the Dean Studio (DVN 91), then a joiner's workshop until it was burnt down in 1954.

SHOPPING

For years the Association has provided a free taxi service to take pensioners up to the West End. Now that there is no longer a complete range of shops in Queensferry Street, a trip to Stockbridge or Comely Bank might be more useful. For that, a one-way trip in a taxi would not be enough. Are there a few car-owners, free during the day, who would be willing to drive old people there and back on one morning or afternoon a week, but taking it in turns, so that no driver would be on duty more than once a month? The Secretary would be glad to hear from drivers, and from those who would use such a service. (The Tuesday morning taxi run to the West End would continue.)

On Thursday 21st July, bright and early (7.45 a.m.) eleven of us arrived at the Edinburgh Dock in Leith for the cruise on the Mer du Nord (known locally as the North Sea), courtesy of LRC Water and Drainage Department, as advertised in DVN No. 91.

Captain Leask was on holiday, but his No 2, Mr Dyson, made sure we had a thoroughly enjoyable trip.

On one hand we were very well fed: continental breakfast as soon as we had cleared the lock gates, coffee at 11 o'clock, a four-course lunch and afternoon tea or coffee with biscuits and fruit cake.

The "chef" was very chatty and informative about all aspects of the docks, the Firth of Forth, previous passengers, the sailing ...

The engineer took us into the engine control room and the steering-gear compartment and discussed the working of this vessel and others, the Region's sewage disposal procedure, sewage disposal elsewhere, pollution of European and world waterways, chemical versus natural fertilisers ...

One crew member turned out to have a father-in-law residing in the Well Court - but very few of the DVA group were even members of the Association. (Did you all think that announcement was a spoof?).

The bridge crew let us look at charts, at the radar, the radio, tested the Mayday alarm for us, explained traffic procedures, the reason for the route taken ...

We were allowed to ask anything of anyone and roam almost anywhere. One brave soul might even have climbed to the crow's nest, had the vertical ladder not been rather wet.

The inner walls of "Gardyloo" are covered with all manner of reading material. The lounge too had magazines, newspapers, pamphlets and books. There was entertaining reading in the Visitors' book. It was sometimes difficult to tear oneself away and see what was going on outside.

BATS

The Isle of May was rewarding for nature lovers: seals, puffins etc. We had a different-from-usual view of the little villages strung out along the Fife coast as we sailed by. We could also see the Lothian coast and the Bass Rock, but further away, as it was Port Out, Starboard Home, to sail with the currents down and up the Firth.

Unfortunately, when we reached the dumping area near the Bell Rock Lighthouse (for this half of the year), we couldn't see the Cairngorms, since the weather was dreich, when it was not actually raining. But the sea was calm.

And so back to Leith Docks, where we admired the precision of No 2's steering with and against the currents through the lock gates (and later through the docks), waited and watched the water level rising in the lock. We berthed, and the 1195th sailing of M.V. Gardyloo was complete. C.G.

THE WALKWAY

Work on the footpath upstream from the iron footbridge is to be resumed early in October. Only when the low-level section is complete will it be possible to bring in the equipment needed for the engineering task of erecting a ramp up to the top of the weir, so that there will be a link with the existing Dean Bank Footpath.

It was originally intended that there should be an alternative access through the pend at the far end of Damside. If you go through it, you will find a short stretch of path blocked by a stone wall which was built to protect the new development from an exceptional (once-in-a-hundred-years) flood. We are arguing that there should be a stile there. We hope that even the owners of the houses adjoining that pend will appreciate that it would be delightful for Damside residents to have direct access to the sylvan walk along Dean Bank. This alternative route would also be valuable when the low-level part of the walkway is flooded, as is bound to happen from time to time.

Many bats have been observed beside the Water of Leith between the Hilton National Hotel and the Dear Village, but the Lothians Bat Group have no information about the roosts in Edinburgh. If you know of one, you are asked to contact the Natural History Department, Royal Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street. (225 7524 ext. 262).

The four species found in the Lothians feed only on insects. (A single bat can eat thousands of tiny insects in a single night). In June or July female bats gave birth to a single young in warm maternity roosts, which are often in lofts of houses (of any age) or in holes in trees. The mothers usually remain in the same roost until their offspring are weaned at above five weeks. They only leave the flightless young bats in the roost for an hour or two each night, in order to feed. The bats cluster together to keep warm; this helps the young to grow quickly. They must be able to hunt for themselves as soon as possible if they are to catch enough food to build up fat reserves for hibernation.

In the autumn, the maternity roosts have broken up and the females join the males in their roosts. Mating takes place now and sometimes in the winter hibernation sites. These are in cool, damp places such as caves, cellars, tunnels and holes in trees. The bats' body temperature is lowered, sometimes nearly to 0°C, and their pulse is slowed. They must not warm up and become active as they would use up their fat store before the end of the winter. They may wake up to feed on mild nights or to move if conditions become unsuitable in their roost.

The numbers of these harmless furry animals are declining, due to persecution by people, reduction of their insect food and loss of their roosting sites. The Lothians Bat Group are active in conservation and recording. Like many other naturalists, they are trying replace old myths and fears about bats with understanding and tolerance.

Dr Stuart Smith will give an illustrated talk on bats on Wednesday September 28.

HIGH GREEN

Planning consent has been granted for the major development proposed by New Capital and Scottish Properties (architects: Yeoman McAllister). There are to be 43 dwellings and an office, between the new Belford Court and Hawthorn Buildings, and from Belford Road to the river.

On the same day consent was refused for a development in Thirlestane Road, against which 100 objections had been lodged. There were only 17 letters of objection to the plans for High Green. If you were appalled by the density of the development and the destruction of the view, if you did not like the architectural style, ask yourself: Did you write in when the application was advertised, and we exhibited the plans? We urged individuals to do so, not just to leave it to the Association.

It is expected that construction work will begin in January; but before that the developer must improve the access road at the post office, and pedestrianise the other slip road. So, no more lorries on the doorsteps of 31 and 32 Belford Road.

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)

Vice-Chairman: Mr Ted Fisher
29/1 Sunbury Place (225 1123)

SUBSCRIPTIONS (1988-9)

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

DIARY

Wednesday, September 28 at 7.30
BATS Dr Stuart Smith
in the Seminar Room, Miller Row.

Wednesday, October 19 at 7.00
MARY KING'S CLOSE

A visit to a 16th century street, now underground, which was sealed off for hundreds of years after an outbreak of plague. Maximum 30 persons. Give names to Dorothy Forrester or Peggy Valentine. Meet our guide, **Councillor Paul Martin**, in the quadrangle of the City Chambers 7 p.m.

(Warning: You have to go down and up steep slopes.)

Wednesday, November 9 at 7.30
**TOOLS FOR SELF-RELIANCE IN
THE THIRD WORLD - Paul Turner**
in the Seminar Room, Miller Row.

Tuesday, December 6 at 7.30
**THE GRAND CANYON AND OTHER
NATIONAL PARKS IN THE UNITED
STATES - Doug Lakie**
in the Seminar Room, Miller Row.

The Seminar Room is in the offices of Robert Matthew, Johnson-Marshall & Partners, who generously allow us to hold our meetings there. Enter from the riverside, a few yards down from the old stone bridge in the middle of the Village.

REST AWHILE

Within the village itself there is only one public seat - the one at the bridge. We could do with another, for example in front of Hawthorn Buildings. The cost of the standard model, which would be installed and maintained by the Council, is £356. Is there any chance of a gift? a bequest? another memorial? Or do you think that the Association should pay for one? **D.F.**