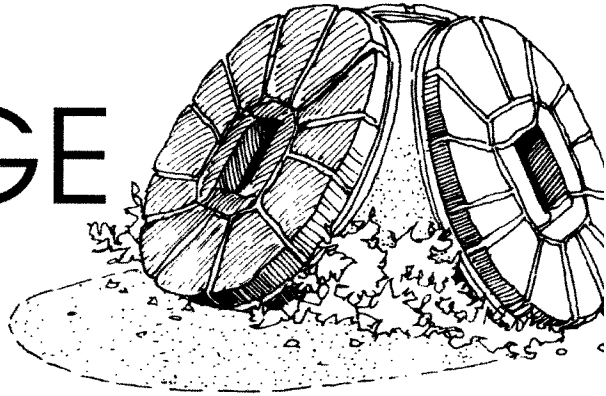


# DEAN VILLAGE NEWS



No.95 Autumn 1989

## A DISCARDED BRAT

*One day a man and a woman arrived in a car to escort me back to Edinburgh to my mother, but apparently she would have nothing to do with me, so I was dumped on to an Aunt Annie Forbes, a half-sister of my mother's who lived at No. 2 Hawthornbank Buildings, Dean Village...*

*At almost six years old I went to live in her two-roomed house, perched on the summit of a lofty bank overlooking the River Dean, whose gully torrents poured down like waterfalls, winding its way through the heart of the Dean Village, with the old-fashioned quaint shaped houses, and red tiled roofs with their crow-stepped gables and the old clock tower in its unique setting and in the distance the mighty Dean Bridge spanning the river bearing the weight of the traffic to and fro. A picturesque view presented itself to me where ever I turned my eyes.*

*Aunt Annie who was a widow, had to go out daily and work for her livelihood. She had one of a family, a laddie called Jack, very much pampered by his mother. My cousin and I attended the Dean Village school and the little Mission Hall of St Mary's Episcopal Church on the cobbled brae. For a while I thought I was in a new world. A gentleman visited me regularly every weekend and stayed till Monday. He taught me to call him Papa, and I looked forward so*

*eagerly to his visits. He was always so kind and gentle... Alas, one weekend he did not come. I felt lost and afraid, something like a pang entered by heart that I should never see him again. I wept and longed for the protection and comfort of his arms. Every day I looked up and down the streets and by-ways, listening for the sound of his footsteps coming down the cobbled brae. But all in vain. I never saw my Papa again...*

*After this catastrophe my whole world suddenly came to an end. I was no longer the carefree, happy child and I felt myself neglected. My Aunt's attitude towards me was entirely changed. No longer had she the same interest in my welfare. Aunt Annie was a tall, handsome woman, and exceptionally good-looking and always the centre of attraction. She loved company, especially uniforms. The War being on, Edinburgh was full of troops drafted from all parts of the globe...*

*Aunt not only loved companionship, but also was very fond of a wee dram, and so was never without a bottle of something or other. She had a most charming manner and could twist the opposite sex round her little finger. It was a case of "Come into my parlour said the spider to the fly". Young as I was, my eyes witnessed many queer goings-on, all very strange and foreign to me...*

*My Aunt Annie gradually became a heavy drinker and there wasn't a night of the week but she was out with her friends, and I was shown the outside of the door. How I dreaded being left out so long, crouched down by the side of the River Dean, clinging to the railings, my cries of heartbreak drowned by the roaring waters, until a neighbour, taking a last look round before retiring to bed, noticing my pitiful plight piloted me into her home and sat me down comfortably by the fireside and a glass of hot milk. I remained there until the early hours of next morning when Auntie and her associates would come tottering down the cobbled brae hanging on to each other, all being the worse of drink. They were singing at the pitch of their voices. What a hullabaloo they made. Auntie would come staggering up to one of the neighbouring windows giving it a none too canny rap, doing her best to make herself sound polite and cry in a high-pitched parrot-like voice, "Is wee Lizzie in?"... On entering the house I usually received a box on the ear, and was shoved through to the other room out of the way...*

Lizzie McKay had been neglected from her birth in 1909 by her mother, whose six-year-old son had recently been murdered by a mad stranger who threw him down the steps of the public lavatory at Tollcross.

After the Dean Village, where she may have spent less than a year, there were happier times in Balgreen Orphanage, then in Strathnairn. There followed a life of domestic service, illness and sometimes homelessness and destitution. There were nightmarish episodes of what seemed to be plots and persecution, with imprisonments and escapes, one from 18 Dean Terrace. (Lizzie in her nightgown on a balcony three storeys up, shouting for help to the crowd which gathered below; eventual escape in a police van).

The real escape she sought was from failure and conflict, and this she seems ultimately to have achieved. She is now a kenspeckle figure in Inverness, where she has had considerable success in raising money for charity, and where her autobiography has been published. A copy has been given to the DVA and can be borrowed from the Chairman or the Secretary. But if you buy a copy (£2.00) the profit goes to charity.

Miss McKay's aunt and her cousin Jack Forbes are remembered in the Village. He became a French polisher with Whytock & Reid, later an antique dealer. Does anyone remember wee Lizzie?

**A DISCARDED BRAT — A Tiny's Tale of Survival, by Elizabeth (Suzie) McKay** (Eccles Highland Printers, Henderson Road, Inverness).

#### **WILLIAM BOSWELL 1909-1989**

Sadly we record the death at his home in Well Court of Willie Boswell, who lived all his life in the Dean Village. Our sympathy goes out to his widow Betty. He was one of a family of ten, of whom only a sister, Mrs Ena Turner (also of Well Court) is now left.

#### **SEWERS**

*As the New Town grew and villages outside the city expanded with the establishment of industries along its banks, the Water of Leith became too convenient as a ready-made drain and rubbish dump. Acts of Parliament were obtained in 1896 to authorise the construction of sewers down the length of its valley, and these relieved the overburdened river of much of its unpleasantness. Thanks to these acts, to the more recent endeavours of the Forth River Purification Board and to the occasional activity of groups of young volunteers (not all young! D.L.F.) "the Water of Leith to-day, though not yet as sparkling as a Highland burn, is sufficiently clean to maintain its annual stock of trout. (From "Cycle and Walk in Lothian".)*

Those sewers can be seen in the bed of the river or beside it.

Every so often there is a rather unsightly brick box for access and maintenance. (These replace the original cast-iron access points) and some recent repairs in the river bed have been done in concrete. A new sewer is being laid across the building site at High Green, and will presumably be linked to the existing main sewer below the river. It is not only to serve the new development: the old sewer crossing the site is being diverted to allow more freedom in the layout - or to allow more buildings to be packed on to the site.

## FOR CYCLISTS AND WALKERS

A description of footpaths and cycleways in Lothian has been published by the Highways Department, in association with the Health Education Department of Lothian Health Board. It deals mainly with recently created routes, many of them on old railway lines.

Parts of the Water of Leith Walkway are covered: Balerno to Juniper Green; Roseburn to Stockbridge; Juniper Green to Slateford; Canonmills to Leith (in that order!). The writer has managed to describe "Roseburn to Stockbridge" without mentioning the Dean Village, although we are told that "an alternative to the steps up to Dean Path is to be provided by a path along the waterside at the Tannery". Useful information, for anyone who knows where the Tannery is!

Unfortunately the pamphlet cannot serve well as a guide to help strangers - or even Edinburgh folk - walk, say, from Roseburn to Leith; for it can be difficult to find one's way between sections, e.g. from Falshaw Bridge to the Rocheid Path, or in the Canonmills area. The Planning Department of Edinburgh District Council has published leaflets about certain sections, but one really needs a single pamphlet to guide one all the way. We shall continue to urge this on organisations which deal with the Walkway.

Nevertheless, the new publication is useful. Have you found all of these new walkways: Haddington-Longniddry; the Pencaitland Railway Walk; the Newbridge to Queensferry Cycleway; Penicuik to Bonnyrigg; Livingston Village to Midcalder? You may not even have found all the ones in Edinburgh.

The pamphlet is well produced and attractively illustrated, and it's free: "Cycle and Walk in Lothian", from Lothian Highways Department, 19 Market Street.

You may find some leaflets loose inside your copy, as I did, including a very good one, with a large and detailed map, about the route from Roseburn over the viaduct to Davidson's Mains or Granton Road.

By the way, that link from the iron footbridge to Dean Bank is really going to be completed soon, with a ramp at the weir, could, or damheid ("dam" meaning lade, as in "Damside").

## DEVELOPMENTS AND PLANNING APPLICATIONS

**High Green** (the building site): Yes, the view will be blocked. We lodged a strong protest but planning consent was granted, for 43 flats etc. and an office near the river. Yes, it's too much (we protested about that too) but at least the design is quite good. Yes, the site is a terrible mess. That's partly inevitable; as for the litter, we are using every means we can to have that dealt with, especially on the river bank. Why was Belford Road closed in July/August? Deep digging in the site had weakened the retaining wall, so that cracks appeared in the road. (A gas pipe was urgently sealed off). We have had some success in preventing noisy work, such as pile-driving, before 8 a.m. We had appealed to have Sunday work prohibited, but this was not made a condition on the planning consent.

**A future building site?** (4 Belford Road). There has been planning consent for an office block here for more than 15 years. Several plans have received consent. Several times the developer has sold out to another. They have probably been afraid of losing money on this very difficult site. It's not just the steepness: there is a geological problem too.

In 1987 Walker Contracts Ltd obtained consent for an excessively bulky block, rather badly designed. They seem to have sold the site (with the planning consent) to Caledonian Trust plc, who have now submitted a new design for a building of the same size. At least it is a better design. There is no hope that an objection to its size would succeed. Understandably the residents of Lynedoch House are appalled. However, this development was foreseen when Lynedoch House was planned. The architect, Roland Wedgwood, gave it those angled windows so that they would not look straight across to an office block.

Still, you needn't give up hope: this developer too may find the problems too great.

**Consent refused** - for three flats to be built alongside 6 Belford Park, because "the proposal would result in the over-development of the site and would be out of character with, and affect adversely the appearance of, the street in particular and the Dean Conservation Area in general". (The same could be said about that office

block, but the original consent was granted before this was a Conservation Area).

**An Adult Amusement Centre?** There has been an application for change of use of premises at 18 Shandwick Place. The DVA has objected. We don't want the sort of establishment which dominates Lothian Road to invade the West End area.

**Rankin's corner:** We did not object to what is now being done at the corner of Hope Street and Queensferry Street, for the shop was not going to be permanently lost, and the restaurant was to be ingeniously inserted in the basement in what looked like an attractive design. Now there is an application to change the use of the basement from restaurant to public house and restaurant. This sounds ominous. Does it imply more overflow from Lothian Road? We may lodge an objection. There is no need for any more pubs in Queensferry Street!

**10-11 Belford Road** (The office of Ian Burke Associates, Architects, entered from the Broad Stairs): The planning application is for a small, one-storey addition behind nos. 15-16.

**The shop in Damside:** Planning consent for its demolition was refused. Smart's have appealed to the Secretary of State. The decision will be made by a Scottish Office Reporter after a site visit on September 20th.

## REFUSE

During the summer the Director of Cleansing sent letters to everyone in the Village, asking them to put out their household refuse properly tied up and only on the collection days (Tuesday and Friday). This was in response to a complaint to him from a resident about the state of affairs. A second, stronger, letter followed when there was little or no improvement.

As it happened, your Secretary had also sent two circulars on the same subject to Hawthornbank Lane and Bell's Brae.

It's not only that bags lying around are unsightly: if there is a chicken carcase, for example, in one, it is torn open and the contents scattered by cats - or maybe even rats.

**For early birds** At Belford Road Post Office, Stuart McCormack has widened the range of goods and newspapers and is opening at 7 a.m.

## DIARY

**Tuesday, October 10 at 7.30 Kenneth Sanderson: WILDLIFE IN TANZANIA** - a welcome return of our globe-trotting naturalist, who has delighted us in previous years with his illustrated talks about his travels. In the Seminar Room, Miller Row, by kind permission of Robert Matthew, Johnson-Marshall & Partners. 20 pence. Tea served.

**Tuesday, November 14 at 7.30: "THE PEOPLE'S STORY"** - A visit to the new museum in Canongate Tolbooth. It tells of the lives, work and pastimes of ordinary people in Edinburgh from the late 18th century to the present day. It is filled with the sounds, sights and smells of life in the past - a prison cell, a cooper's workshop, a draper's shop, a 1940's kitchen, a steamie, a pub ... There will be a talk by one of the curators and tea will be served. There is a lift in the museum. During the day (10 to 5) admission is free, but for this special opening there is a charge: £2.00 (£1.00 for pensioners). **Book** with Mrs Peggy Valentine or Dorothy Forrester. Say if you would like a lift or can offer lifts.

**Tuesday, December 5 at 8 p.m.** in Drumsheugh Toll, 3 Belford Road: What shall we call this social occasion? **A PARTY? LET'S CHAT? or MEET YOUR NEIGHBOUR?** There will be food and drink and some music. Lynn Turner would like to hear of local talent too (35/2 Dean Path, 225 2543). Tickets £2.50 (Pensioners £1.50) from committee members.

## 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:** Ms Helen Callum  
1/7 Dean Path (225 5848)

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

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