



# DEAN VILLAGE NEWS

No.107: Autumn 1993

## THREE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

In 1693 John Slezer published in *Theatrum Scotiae* engravings of the principal towns, castles and churches of Scotland, which he had drawn meticulously over a period of twenty years. The picture above is a reduced version of *The Prospect of Edinbrugh* (sic) from the DEAN, or rather from the Dean Estate as the Latin title makes clear. (The House of Dean stood on the high ground to the north (Dean Cemetery); the village in the foreground was "The Village of the Water of Leith" until well into the nineteenth century.) The Baxter's Tollbooth (1675) is prominent at the foot of Bell's Brae. Hawthornbank Lane runs from there towards the right, above the steep bank of the river. There is a hint of the ford, with "Stinking Brae" running straight up the slope beyond. Coates House (1625) is on the horizon above. But what is the flat roofed tower nearer the river? The present West Mill was built in 1805, but we can see its massive predecessor on the left of the old bridge. Thatched roofs show the line

of Dean Path, but we can not see what lay between them and the river. Other thatched roofs stretch away to the left along West Mill Lane, which was longer then. The other buildings to the left of the West Mill must be those which stood either side of Miller Row, including Lindsay's Mill and possibly Mar's Mill (the Oxylitre site). Can we see the great granary "Jericho", built in 1619? The isolated building on the extreme left is probably Greenland Mill. At the top of Bell's Brae stands the simple rectangular house which Cabbie Stewart ornamented and extended at the end of the nineteenth century.

The road to town winds on past little cottages at Kirkbrae head (near the West End) and past St Cuthbert's Church at the head of the Nor' Loch.

All the other engravings, including other views of Edinburgh and the Castle, are displayed in the National Library of Scotland, George IV Bridge. The exhibition, **Scotland First Portrayed** continues to

October 30th. It is open Monday to Saturday, 10am to 5pm and on Sunday 2pm to 5pm. Admission is free.

**There will be a special opening for members of the Dean Village Association on Tuesday October 12th at 7 pm. See DIARY on back page.**

### **PHOTOGRAPHS**

After my appeal in DVN 105 the DVA archive has been enriched by photographs given by Jim Lee and Col. Moir, which show the new buildings as they were going up in the 1980's, and J. Bowie Dickson has taken a large number of photographs which provide a complete record of the Village in 1993. We have copies of engravings etc. from about 1690 onwards, but after Thomas Begbie's photographs taken about 1858 we have hardly anything until the 1970's. Family albums must have photographs of people and places from the 1920's onwards, or even earlier. Will readers please let me copy them for the albums I am compiling. Anyone is welcome to come and see these albums by arrangement with me.

Dorothy Forrester

### **LOCAL HISTORY**

A course to prepare people to undertake research in local history is being run on Wednesday mornings, beginning on October 6th. Spaces are still available. For details apply to Michael Core, 31 Garleton Court, Gullane EH31 2HT. It is likely that the DVA will subsidise the fee.

### **MARY HUTCHISON CORBETT**

We record with sadness the death of Mrs Corbett on August 12th at the age of 82. She was buried in Dean Cemetery, where the Rev. Dr Cattanach spoke movingly of her life and personality. (The Rev. J Gordon Grant was on sabbatical leave.) She was born Mary Hutchison at 4 Dean Path Buildings. Her parents later moved to 10 Hawthorne Terrace, and her mother died in 1940. Her son Ian remembers living there

with his grandfather in the early 1940's, but when his father, David Corbett (from Bo'ness) returned from the war the young family obtained the tenancy of 2 Hawthorne Terrace. They moved in 1956 to 16 Dean Path Buildings.

### **ANNE BAXTER**

Anne Marion Leadbetter Baxter, whose parents lived at 10 Belford Mews, died in London earlier this year. In accordance with her wishes her ashes were brought back to Scotland, and scattered from the old stone bridge in the Village on May 9th.

### **DEAN CEMETERY**

Mr Joseph Gibb has retired from service as Superintendent. He held this appointment for 37 years, living in the lodge at the Dean Path Gate and often to be seen in the village. He and his wife have gone to live in the Harrison Park area of Edinburgh. Mr Gibb's successor as the Superintendent of the Dean Cemetery is Mr George Glazier who comes from the Royal Parks in London.  
Basil Skinner

### **WEST END COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

On November 8, Dorothy Forrester will be giving a short talk on the Dean Village and its Association. Visitors are welcome to attend at 10 Palmerston Place at 7.30pm.

### **PLANNING MATTERS**

**Belford Park:** The ugly extension was proposed for 2B, the main door flat, not 2A as reported in DVN 106. We have made no objection to the addition of a dormer window at no. 5A, it is similar to the ones at no. 7.  
**4 Drumsheugh Place:** Consent for change of use from shop to restaurant was refused. There is now an application for minor alterations with a view to its use by "St Columba's Wardrobe"  
**40 Well Court:** The owner wanted to incorporate much of the common landing into his flat and began by demolishing the wall of the toilet without listed building consent. When this was reported to the

Planning Department, he was obliged to stop work and apply for consent. This was refused and he will be compelled to restore the landing to its original state.

**Belford Church:** Last year there was an application for consent to demolish this A-listed building and replace it with offices and associated parking. A more recent application to erect a Portakabin was withdrawn, but a hut has been installed without consent and the owners have been told that a retrospective application is unlikely to succeed.

### **ATTENTION DOG OWNERS!**

"Poop scoops" can be obtained from the Environmental Health Department (Dog Wardens Section), but the DVA also has a supply. Ask Peggy Valentine, 31/2 Belford Road (225 8942), or Isla Calder, 38 Well Court (225 7822)

### **TREES**

A considerable number have been cut down - not only diseased elms - on Dean Bank and behind Donaldson's College. The purpose is to let light in for saplings and new trees which will be planted to vary the composition and age structure of the woodland. Sycamore and *Rhododendron ponticum* will be prevented from taking over the cleared areas.

### **A CHARIOT RACE**

*It was early one hushed morning on a Sunday in early summer back in the early 70 s. Not a soul in sight as I strolled through a veil of haar towards the Queensferry Road. No traffic, no people not even a vagabond dog. I was a hundred yards or so from the Dean Bridge, when behind me I held the noise - a deep rumble with drumming staccato accompaniment and a clattering metallic rattle, then wild whoops and the kind of animal yelps that humans sometimes make. The drumming turned quickly into hooves scarting against asphalt. Round the corner, abreast of each other, racing towards me and taking up the entire width of the capital's main artery to the north, charged two St*

*Cuthbert's Co-op milk carts. Empty crates danced. Wheels thundered. Wild eyes popped behind flying manes. The drivers flapped reins furiously and crouched low in their seats to avoid Apache arrows.*

*The bridge where the road narrowed dramatically lay ahead. Suddenly the script changed from Stage Coach to Ben Hur. With even wilder howls the charioteers shot upright and flayed flanks with leather.*

*I found myself running ahead of them to keep up, aware that the finishing post was the bridge itself, where one of the carts would have to give way or hurtle down the Dean gorge and into the Water of Leith. They judged it to a whisker. At the very last moment the horse nearest me nosed ahead and raced on across the arches. The loser slowed down and lit a fag. When I caught up he shouted to me, I'll get the bugger next week, then trotted off for breakfast.*

W Gordon Smith in Scotland on Sunday, June 5 1993.

### **NUMBERS TO NOTE**

**Highways Department:** Mr Murray (229 9292 ext.4666) will positively welcome reports of inadequate reinstatement of surfaces which have been dug up for the installation of TV cables.

**Cleansing Department:** Phone 529 3030 between 8.30am and 5pm Monday to Thursday, 8.30am and 3.45pm on Fridays for problems with street cleaning, litter bins, refuse collection, special uplift of bulky items or for the removal of dumped rubbish.

**Community Police Officers** at the West End Station, Torphichen Street: Ring 229 2323 and ask for P.C. Strange or P.C. Houston, or leave a message for them.

**Dog Wardens** for North Edinburgh: Ring 529 3475

**CLARENCE:** is now on free phone 0800 232323. Use it to report blocked drains, lamps out of order, pot-holes, faults in pavements or footbridges. If the fault involves danger to the public, say so. The lines are open from 8am to 5pm Monday to Thursday and 8am to 4.30pm on Fridays. It

was after a call to CLARENCE that our footbridge was so promptly repaired.

### **NEW EDINBURGH VISTAS**

*A clearance, which is not a slum clearance, is in process of completion at the Dean Village, Edinburgh's West End beauty spot, which is a constant source of attraction to artists. The clearance is one of those aesthetic moves by the authorities which have done so much to make Edinburgh one of the finest cities in Europe.*

*It involves the demolition of a granary, dating from 1645, but of no architectural interest, and is to cost between £600 and £700.*

*The main object of the clearance, which was hastened by a serious accident which took place at the granary some time ago, is to open up at Miller Row new views of the Dean Village and of the Church of the Holy Trinity...*

*The walls of the granary are to be cut down to a height of three or four feet, and the ground between them, which slopes down to the Water of Leith, filled with rubble, on top of which is to be placed earth. This surface it is intended to utilise for a picturesque shrubbery, in which rhododendrons or other flowering shrubs will bloom.*

*The site of the granary, which, like other old buildings in the Dean Village, at one time belonged to the baxters, or bakers, of Edinburgh, will be preserved by the outline of the walls. Two stones from the building, of more than ordinary interest, are to be kept. One of them is a tablet, on which are sculptured two baker's peels, crossed, which resemble in shape tennis rackets. This stone is to be built into a large pillar where the old wall of the granary joins the parapet of the Dean Village bridge at the foot of Bell's Brae. The other stone is a lintel of a doorway which gave entrance below the tablet. On this tablet is inscribed the legend, Blessit be God for all his Giftis. The lintel will be built into the adjacent wall, the pointing of which is to be of a rustic type, so as to preserve the rural appearance of the whole scheme. ...The building which is in process*

*of demolition is a particularly large one. ...According to one account, the chief building being demolished was known as Lindsay's Mill, and was at one time used as a distillery. Over the sculptured stone at its gable end is said to have been an ancient dial. The building has been in a disused state for many years.*

From "The Scotsman", 14 May 1931

An accompanying photograph shows men working on an area extending to where the mill stones now stand. They were presumably installed at the same time.

Does anyone remember the "serious incident" referred to in the third paragraph?

### **FOR YOUR DIARY**

**Tuesday October 12 at 7pm**

THE NATIONAL LIBRARY, George IV Bridge: A special opening of the exhibition described on page one for DVA members. Lifts will be arranged, if you contact Dorothy Forrester, saying whether you would like a lift or can offer lifts. Cars will leave the village at 6.40pm.

**Tuesday October 26 at 7:30pm**

Dr ALEX CAIN: A talk entitled "The National Library of Scotland - Our Heritage of Books" in the Seminar Room, Miller Row.

**Tuesday November 23 at 7:30pm**

Dr HENRY GEBBIE: A talk entitled "...and a nightingale sang." in the Seminar Room, Miller Row.

**December**, on a date to be announced, CAROLS AT THE CHRISTMAS TREE

### **THE DEAN VILLAGE ASSOCIATION**

Chairman: Barbara MacKay  
8 Damside EH4 3BB (226 2512)

Secretary: Dorothy Forrester  
13 Belford Road EH4 3BL (225 5843)

Treasurer: Jeremy Parkin  
1B Belford Park EH4 3DP (332 3726)

### **SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Ordinary: £3.00 (or £3.75 with postage)  
Senior Citizen: £1.50 (or £2.25 with postage)  
Life Membership £30.00