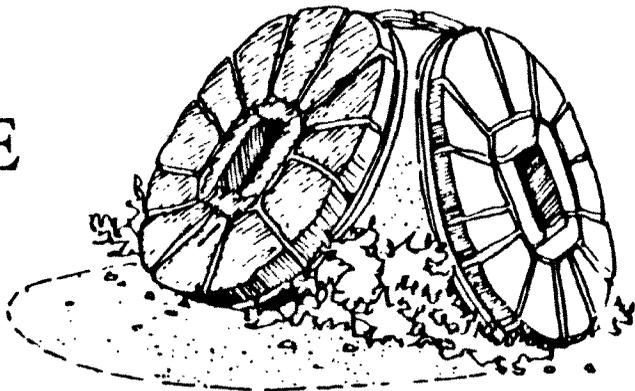


DEAN VILLAGE NEWS



No.110: Autumn 1994

ALEKSANDER ZYW

The red-tiled group beside the old stone bridge was converted into a house and studio for this artist by Basil Spence in the nineteen-forties. Later another studio was created in a building on Bell's Brae which formerly had a smiddy at street level and a saddler's workshop on the first floor. It was here that an exhibition of Aleksander Zyw's early work was held during the Festival.

Born in Warsaw in 1905, he was attracted away from Poland by the Mediterranean light and the life of a wandering landscape painter. When war broke out he was in France, where he managed to join the Polish army, and he experienced the extreme dangers of their brief campaign there before escaping through Spain and Portugal to Scotland.

"Swift yellow clouds chased by the wind from all quarters of the sky towards the Castle greeted me on a clear winter morning. The Castle was blue, the sky pink and the young moon pale and green. Girls with copper-coloured hair and men wearing strange rainbow-coloured skirts stepped from the pages of Walter Scott to welcome me as I arrived in Edinburgh."

These are the words of a landscape painter, but in Scotland he turned to other subjects. Pictures in this year's

exhibition included "The Artist's Studio at 5 Alva Street" and "Portrait of Miss Leslie Goddard". She became his wife.

The first time Aleksander Zyw walked down Bell's Brae into the Village it was to make sketches for an article on "Edinburgh's River" by George Scott-Moncrieff (SMT Magazine, February 1945): "I was enchanted. It seemed almost unbelievable that such a small romantic little place should still exist in the heart of the city. There and then I decided that this was where I was going to live and work."

So the Zyws came to the house by the bridge, and Aleksander painted in the adjoining studio, until the peace he needed for his work was disturbed by two noisy little boys, and he moved to the new studio on Bell's Brae.

There was a new threat to his peace in 1971 - the proposal to build a six-storey office block on Belford Road, right behind his Bell's Brae studio. "I've been a fighter all my life, but how does the ordinary man get weapons to fight things like this? All I can do is to put my point of view to the court".

This and the previous quotation are from the article by James Gray in the Edinburgh Evening News of February 18

1971: "One Man Fighting for the Beauty of his Village". On the following day he was going to attend the Dean of Guild Court. Since deciding to protest he had had many telephone calls from well-wishers equally concerned over the future of Dean Village. "It remains a one-man protest, however, because there is no village amenity society to back him up". But if he was alone then, his was not a lone voice for long: the Dean Village Association was formed on April 25th, with Basil Skinner as Chairman, Stuart Matthew as Vice-Chairman and Leslie Zyw on the Committee.

For the last twenty years or so she and her husband have spent most of their time in Italy, where Aleksander and Michael Zyw produce superlatively good olive oil, as well as paintings, at Poggio Lamentano. However, from time to time we have been happy to see the Zyws back in the Village, where their other son Adam, architect and sculptor, still lives in the red-tiled house by the bridge.

That Office Block

The article on Aleksander Zyw shows how the Dean Village Association was founded in reaction to the threat of a large office building on Belford Road, between Drumsheugh Toll and Drumsheugh Baths. That threat has never gone away. The site has been sold and re-sold. Successive plans were produced and modified; they all obtained planning consent in spite of protests from the Dean Village Association, the Cockburn Association and others; but none has been built, probably because the difficulties of the site made the projects unprofitable. There has been no action for some time over the current plan which obtained consent in 1991 and which had the advantage of access from Bell's Brae to an underground car park. Should we be thankful for the recession?

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

3-4 Queensferry Street: Application for change of use from offices (the Procurator Fiscal's) to hotel/hostel.

7-8 Queensferry Street: Night-club in basement, entered from the lane. Consent granted on very stringent conditions as regards noise, vibration and cooking smells.

40a Queensferry Street: A change of use to restaurant or hot-food takeaway has been allowed, after an appeal.

Edinburgh Sports Club: Planning consent has been granted for a minor extension and alterations.

National Gallery of Modern Art: Plans for a reserve store for the Royal Scottish Academy and the National Galleries of Scotland in a new building within the further playground.

Architects: Lee Boyd Partnership. Consent granted.

Belford Mews: There has been no decision yet on the plans for a "high-class development of mews houses" on the site of the long harled building.

Hilton National Hotel: Planning consent was granted in 1987 for an extension which would house a leisure centre and bedrooms, and for a terrace of ten suites upstream of that. A two-year extension was granted in 1992. Some work has begun on the site.

WHYTOCK & REID

Whytock & Reid's tall brick building of 1886 has been renovated and altered so as to provide spacious new showrooms. An inaugural exhibition, "One and a half Centuries of Whytock & Reid", included examples of furniture made by the firm to designs by Sir Robert Lorimer for houses such as Kellie Castle, Marchmont and Earlshall. In the Christmas exhibition there will be silk and dried flowers and flower paintings by Anne Cottrill.

WATER OF LEITH WALKWAY

A guide and map will be available very soon. It will be on sale at £2.00 at the Planning Department, 1 Cockburn Street, and the Water of Leith Walkway Trust, Slateford. Your Secretary may also have copies.

Dogs: We decided to have another poop-scoop campaign in September. The one announced for June was not well enough prepared, but I did learn then that handing out free poop-scoops, provided by the Council, is not as hazardous as I had feared: no one threatened to throw the poop-scoop, or me into the river.

No way out? There are notices warning that there is no exit at Roseburn Cliff, because the informal track which has been used for some time is being replaced by a properly constructed path. However, it is possible to get through to Roseburn by going up the steps to the viaduct on the railway path.

ACTION!

An Environmental Action Plan for the Water of Leith was published by the Scottish Wildlife Trust a year ago. Now the Water of Leith Action Group, comprising representatives of the Water of Leith Conservation Trust, the Wildlife Trust and relevant departments of the local councils, has produced an Action Guide to the Water of Leith, a free leaflet of which your Secretary has a supply.

People who frequent the Water of Leith or who live or work beside it are asked to help the Action Group to ensure that the beauty of the valley is maintained and enhanced. The theme is

Don't ignore it - Report it!

The leaflet gives the phone numbers for reporting litter, dog fouling, damage, flooding, water pollution etc.

THE DEAN ORPHANAGE

There will not be a National Gallery of Scottish Art in the Dean Centre, but there is now a proposal to use the former orphanage for a permanent exhibition of the works of the Leith-born sculptor, Eduardo Paolozzi.

It is reported ("The Scotsman", September 8) that he intends to offer his own collection of his sculptures and drawings to Edinburgh.

The Convener of Lothian Council, Eric Milligan, is confident that the regional council would give the building to the National Galleries of Scotland. Sir Angus Crossart, Chairman of the Trustees, has said that they were delighted at the two offers, but added that the conversion of the building and the running costs would need to be examined. What will the Secretary of State say to this proposal?

AT THE TANNERY

"At about 1940, possibly earlier, I used to play in and around the Tannery with Tom Legget. We built canoes covered with canvas painted with whatever old paint we could lay our hands on and paddled about in the water above the dam just upstream of the Tannery. When we fell into the water, having upset our canoes, we used to dry off on a perforated steel floor where wool pulled from the skin of the fleeces was spread out to dry in currents of hot air. We played there so often that for years after I was never aware of the stink with which the Tannery was associated." (Harold Weaver)

Generations of the Legget family, descended from French Huguenot refugees, were tanners at Greenside, then the Nor' Loch, before coming into the Village of the Water of Leith in 1836. The business continued there until 1973, on the site now occupied by the modern part of Damside. (See DVN 79).

TENANTS' PROBLEMS

The office at No. 2 Belford Road is now occupied by a service set up by Scottish Homes to deal with complaints from tenants and other clients of housing associations and co-operatives. The **Housing Association Ombudsman** is the architect John Richards RSA. He is not a newcomer to our area, for he was, from 1954 to 1986 a partner in Robert Matthew Johnson-Marshall Associates. Projects with which he was most closely concerned during those years included the Royal Commonwealth Pool, the University of Stirling, the new terminal at Edinburgh Airport and RMJM's own offices in the Dean Village. He retired from RMJM in 1986, to set up in independent practice and to give more of his time to work in government social housing agencies. He has however continued to work closely with RMJM: for example he was design consultant for RMJM's Glasgow Royal Concert Hall. The Ombudsman will usually only look into complaints of personal injustice, where this is the result of bad, inefficient or improper administration. You can get an explanatory leaflet from the office. (Phone 220 0599) Mr Richards has stressed that, although appointed by Scottish Homes, he is totally independent of that body. "If ever it tried to interfere in my impartiality I would refuse to come under their influence and I would say so in my annual report".

Private tenants can get help from the District Council's **Tenancy Relations Service**, for example if they have been told to move out, have problems with repairs or are getting hassle from the landlord. FREEPHONE 0500 321 320, 10 am to 3.30 pm, Monday to Friday. (Answerphone outside these hours).

DEAN VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

Chairman: Mrs Peggy Valentine
32/1 Belford Road (225 8942)
Secretary: Miss Dorothy Forrester
13 Belford Road EH4 3BL (226 5843)
Treasurer: Mr R J C Parkin
6B Succoth Place (337 0991)

DIARY

Tuesday, October 18 at 7.30pm
THE WEST HIGHLAND RAILWAY -
How it began, 100 years ago
by **John McGregor**, an Open University tutor who is writing a thesis on this topic and is the author of "100 Years of the West Highland Railway" published by Scotrail.

In the Seminar Room, Miller Row, by kind permission of RMJM.

Tuesday, November 15 at 7.30pm
YOUR NHS WATCHDOG:
Margaret Tait will talk about Lothian Health Board, the independent body set up to represent the public, consulting them about changes and advising them on the provision of services and on the procedure for making complaints.

In the Seminar Room, Miller Row.

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

ARSON!

One September day in 1994 torches flared under the trees on the site of Greenland Mill. A group of militant suffragettes, one of them a local resident, were plotting to set fire to a mansion in Perthshire.

The heroine of the short film is Ethel Moorhead, who was a painter. Several scenes are flash-backs from the nineteen-twenties, when she had a studio in Paris (Well Court Hall). Provisional Title: "Heather on Fire". Producer, Steve Quinn; Director, Mary Gordon.