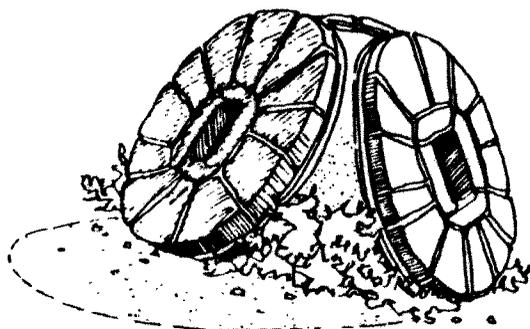


DEAN VILLAGE NEWS

No. 113: Autumn 1995



ALEKSANDER ZYW (1905 ~ 1995)

This distinguished painter died at his home in Italy on September 17th. We gave an account of his life, and of the part he played in the Dean Village, in DVN 110. In an appreciation printed in the Scotsman on September 23rd, Douglas Hall gave a fine account of his work, and ended with this paragraph:

'Aleksander Zyw was a lovable man, rather piratical in appearance, fond of people and conversation, serious and satirical by turns, a martinet yet deeply dependent on his wife, family and friends. To them it is a great sadness that never again will they hear the little sound with which he used to cover a pause in the conversation, or signal the end of a topic: "hopla, popla, tra-la-la".'

A GUIDE

to the Water of Leith Walkway

This was reviewed in DVN 111 ("From Balerno to Leith"). It is an admirable publication and a bargain at £2.00, including a large scale map. It can be obtained from the Secretary of the Dean Village Association, the Post Office at Balerno, the Planning Department at 1 Cockburn Street and the Water of Leith Conservation Centre in the old school at Slateford (24 Lanark Road [455 7367], morning only).

PAINTINGS

An exhibition in the City Art Centre this summer included several paintings of particular interest to us.

Edinburgh from the Dean Village by Paul Sandby (?1730 ~ 1809) dates from about 1750, when he was working in Scotland for the Board of Ordnance Survey as their official draughtsman. (It is in a private collection, but is reproduced in the catalogue of the exhibition.) The view is from upstream of the village, beyond a bend in the valley, so that the heart of the village is hidden, but one can make out the 17th century core of Kirkbrae House ("the House on the Bridge"). Surprisingly, Bell's Brae cannot be seen on the steep wooded slope below it. The road which curves downhill above a high retaining wall is the old Queensferry Road (Belford Road).

It did not exist when Slezer drew the village in the foreground of his *Prospect of Edinburgh* about 1690. (This was reproduced in DVN 107.) He gave prominence to the road coming out of the town by Kirkbrachead (Queensferry Street) and Bell's Brae. This steep approach to the river crossing was still the principal one. There was only a ford at Bell's Mills (Hilton Hotel) and, judging by early maps, the road to it came from the south, perhaps on the line of Palmerston Place and Douglas Gardens.

The first bridge at Bell's Mills was built in the early 18th century (Stanley Jamieson in DVN 78). The road from Kirkbraehead to Bell's Mills must date from about the same time and, having less severe gradients as it crossed the valley, it may soon have superseded the old route through the village as the main road to Queensferry.

An oval water colour by Alexander Nasmyth (1758 ~ 1840) was lent by the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. The viewpoint is the same as Sandby's and the composition and details strikingly similar, although it must have been painted several decades later. A large oil painting of a similar view by his son Patrick (1787 ~ 1831) belongs to the City Art Centre.

The exhibition, subtitled "A Celebration of the City and its Countryside", gave some publicity to the Edinburgh Green Belt Trust, and this prompted us to make that the topic of our meeting on November 28th.

THE ALLOTMENTS

Contrary to what W. Gordon Smith has maintained in "Scotland on Sunday", it was not the National Galleries of Scotland but Lothian Regional Council which gave the Association formal notice to quit the garden ground at the Dean Centre, as they had to do on handing over the former orphanage to the National Galleries. (See DVN 112). However, in a covering letter the council official suggested we apply to the National Galleries for a renewal of the lease, and this we have done.

We await a formal reply, but in the meantime Richard Calvocoressi, Keeper of the Gallery of Modern Art, has written to us that the allotments have great charm and that they *are anxious to retain them as far as possible in whatever landscaping scheme is adopted for the new site ... provided that their use does not interfere with the security of the future*

gallery. Eduardo Paolozzi (whose collection is to form the core of the sculpture gallery) was very taken with them and imagined siting a sculpture in the orchard part ... Once we have appointed an architect, I look forward to discuss with the Dean Village Association such areas of mutual interest.

THE CHILDREN'S GRAVES

Behind the Gallery of Modern Art are the graves of some of the pupils of John Watson's Institution who died there between 1828 and 1879. In DVN 111 we put forward the suggestion from one of our members that something be done to that hidden corner of the grounds. However, none of our members and only one former pupil of John Watson's made a positive response, and the Keeper of the Gallery replied: *I feel at the moment that this is an area to which we would not especially wish to draw attention. Many of us here believe that the charm of the graveyard lies in its secret location. If, however, we succeed in our plan to create one park out of the Gallery of Modern Art and Dean grounds, it may well be that we will want to create a walk or series of routes through the landscape which would highlight such places of interest.*

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENTS

Damside (the shop): The Burrell Company is going to make three flats in the main building and replace the lower with one containing two houses, each with a small garden. This development was advertised first as "Deanhouse", an inappropriate name, which will be changed. The historic Dean House was in the middle of what is now the cemetery.

Belford Mews: Gregor Properties Ltd have begun construction of ten houses (too

many!). Complaints have been made about earth dumped on the bank and slipping into the river.

Sunbury: The remaining timber-drying shed, formally belonging to Whytock & Reid, is a listed building (See DVN 108). Arrangements are being made for it to be dismantled and re-erected in Summerlee Heritage Park, Coatbridge. Will its site be simply part of the garden of "Belford Lodge", the house made out of Whytock & Reid's 1973 showroom and office building?

2 Dean Path: This former shop is to be a studio for Bridget Baines, landscape architect.

Hilton National Hotel: Consent was granted for an extension in 1987 and renewed for two years in 1992. A minimal amount of excavation done on the site prior to the expiry of that consent has sufficed to keep it valid.

13 Melville Place (next to Save the Children): Consent was refused for a tanning salon, on the grounds that the proposal was contrary to the Council's policy on non-retail uses in this street.

THE OLD WINDMILL

It is behind the Gallery of Modern Art, at the top of the steep bank. You can reach it through the car park - go out through the back gate, then well over to the right; or from the Walkway - over the footbridge, up the slope, then well over to the left. The ruin is partly in the boundary wall, but mostly in the adjoining property of Windmill Brae, which is reached from Coatbridge. The owner of the house which has recently been built there has applied for consent for the renovation of the mill, with two rooms in it, one above the other. The future use is not stated.

It is a listed building. An account of it is given in the Inventory of Monuments (1951). *If this is the structure marked "an Old Wind Mill" on a manuscript map in the possession of Edinburgh Corporation it must have been old in 1759. The building consisted of a rectangular block, now demolished, with circular tower at the E. end; the lower part of the tower still stands ... The archway that opened into the missing part is still entire ...*

There is a strong local tradition, recorded by the Ordnance Survey in 1851, and still surviving, that it was used for grinding furze for food for horses - that it was a whin mill. This was discussed in DVN 101.

A NEW HOTEL?

John Ritchie Findlay (1824 ~ 1898) was the wealthy Victorian philanthropist who was responsible for having Well Court built in 1884 on the site of the dilapidated tenements which look so picturesque in the painting of the view from Findlay's house in Rothesay Terrace in 1878. At that time he may have lived at no. 2, not no. 3, which was built (or remodelled?) for him by in 1883-5 to the designs of Sidney Mitchell, who was also the architect of Well Court.

From the back it can be picked out from its neighbours by the small-paned windows in a wide rectangular projection. At the front it is even more distinctive: there are balanced but dissimilar bay windows, flared iron balconies and a timber porch with Renaissance-style carving. The interior is very rich, with marble and alabaster, oak, walnut, cedar and mahogany, fine plaster work and a painted ceiling. In 1891 the house was acquired by the Edinburgh School of Cookery and Domestic Economy ("Atholl Crescent") as a student residence and a place where some were trained in institutional management. ("It was the cleanest house in Edinburgh".) During that

period it was extended into the upper floors of no. 2. The name Melvin House honoured Miss Jessie Melvin, who was Assistant Secretary to the Committee.

After 1970 Melvin House was used as a residence for the Civil Service College, then by the Health Service as a management training centre. It is now on the market (at offers over £450,000), and an application has been made for consent to use the property as a hotel. The neighbours are concerned, especially about traffic, parking and noise. We can certainly insist that any consent for hotel use must be subject to strict conditions about noise - no noisy functions!

The applicant is Edinburgh Community Trust, a charity which aims to set up and manage small businesses creating employment opportunities for individuals with mental health problems, thus helping them to live successfully in the community. Its existing businesses include Six Mary's Place, a guest-house in Stockbridge. Its success is attributed to good management and support of workers with mental health problems, who are closely supervised. (This information comes from the Trust itself, but I have had a very good report of the guest-house. D.F.) In Melvin House the Trust envisages creating 18 full time jobs, of which approximately ten would be for people with mental health problems. In addition up to 40 individuals with mental health problems could be employed part time, with a greater level of support. The aim is to run Melvin House as a Four Crown private hotel, with about 18 en-suite bedrooms. It would cater for the more expensive end of the tourist market and for business people.

FOXES

They live and breed around here. It is possibly foxes that tear open bags of refuse left out overnight.

An illustrated lecture on URBAN FOXES will be given by Dr. Gill Hartley in the lecture theatre of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Inverleith Row, at 3pm Thursday 9th November. Admission free.

DIARY

The indoor meetings will be held in the Seminar Room, Miller Row, by kind permission of Robert Mathew, Johnson-Marshall Associates.

The entrance is about twenty yards down the riverside from the old stone bridge and the foot of Bell's Brae.

Tuesday October 17th at 7.30pm
THE WATER OF LEITH ACTION PLAN - a progress report by Peter Pollard, the new River Valleys Officer of the Scottish Wildlife Trust, with slides.

Tuesday November 28th at 7.30pm
CONSERVING THE GREEN BELT - David Oldham, Manager of the Edinburgh Green Belt Trust, with slides.

December: **CAROLS AT THE CHRISTMAS TREE** Watch for posters.

THE DEAN VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

Chairman: Mrs Peggy Valentine

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Secretary: Miss Dorothy Forrester

13 Belford Road EH4 3BL 226 5843

Treasurer: Mrs Sylvia Bradley

22 Lynedoch Place EH3 7PY 225 2639

(The Editor apologises for omitting Jeremy Parkin from the list of committee members in DVN 112)

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Ordinary	£ 3.00 (or £3.80 with postage)
Senior Citizen	£ 1.50 (or £2.30 with postage)
Life Membership	£30.00

The UK Antarctic Heritage Trust
Reg Charity No. 1024911 (England)
in association with the Dundee Heritage Trust
presents an

ANTARCTIC EVENING

at
Royal College of Physicians, 9 Queen Street, Edinburgh
(near Scottish National Portrait Gallery)

on
Wednesday 22 November 1995 at 7.30pm (doors open 7.00pm)
includes an illustrated lecture

"HUSKY DOGS OF ANTARCTICA: THEIR FINAL JOURNEY"

by
John Killingbeck
who, in 1994, drove a British husky team on the final Antarctic trek
which used dogs

Also, we shall highlight famous people and ships as **Scotland's Heritage of**
exploration and scientific discovery in the Antarctic

ADMISSION BY TICKET: £8.00

Price includes refreshments by VALVONA & CROLLA and entry in a
ticket-holders-only draw for 2 of their Christmas hampers, worth £75 each

ANTARCTIC EVENING: TICKET APPLICATION

(tickets not refundable)

To: D H Moss
UK Antarctic Heritage Trust
48/12 Belford Road, Edinburgh, EH4 3BR

Please supply me with tickets at £8.00 per ticket for the **Antarctic Evening**
at Royal College of Physicians, 9 Queen Street, Edinburgh, **Wednesday 22 November**
1995 at 7.30pm (doors open 7.00pm)

My cheque for £..... made payable to "UK Antarctic Heritage Trust" is enclosed
together with a stamped self-addressed envelope

Name

Address

.....
..... Post Code

Daytime phone No. (useful if there is a query)
(incl STD code)