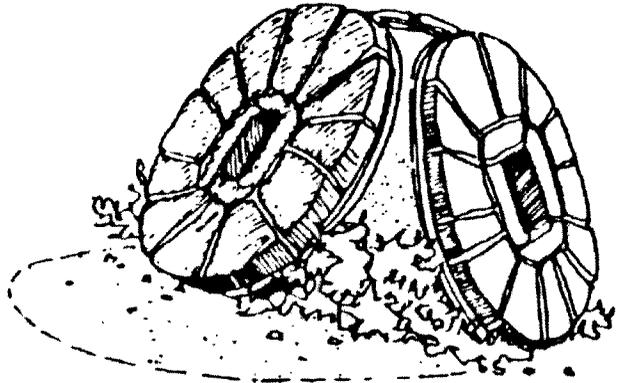


# DEAN VILLAGE NEWS

No. 114 Spring 1996



## TRAFFIC

A long-term resident has written to Councillor Ponton about the traffic in Dean Path, where there is little room for vehicles to pass in the limited width left alongside the parked cars, which are often damaged as a result. He suggested a one-way system. Mr Ponton passed his letter to the Department of Transportation, who asked the Dean Village Association to comment.

Some fifteen years ago we devised a one-way system (Bell's Brae to Dean Path), which was designed to prevent "rat-running" through the Village to Ravelston Dykes by including one-way traffic from west to east in Ravelston Terrace. An explanation and a reply form were sent to all concerned. The majority were favourable, but there were implacable objections from a few, and we were advised that the best of schemes could be killed by a determined minority. There are other problems about a one-way system: for example traffic goes faster. Moreover, if the only way into the Village were down Bell's Brae, there would be many more vehicles trying to make that awkward right turn from the Dean Bridge and waiting for an opportunity to do so while blocking the traffic heading into town. If all our traffic had to leave the Village via Bell's Brae, there would be another set of problems.

Damage to parked cars was not the only problem reported to Councillor Ponton: from time to time larger vehicles, the refuse-collection van and DVA114.9A even a fire-engine, have been ob-

structed by parked cars. This seems to occur outside the hours of parking controls, when cars are parked on both sides near the bridge. We have looked at this carefully, and suggested that double yellow lines should be used to prevent all parking in certain positions. Further up Dean Path, there might be double yellow lines in front of Dean Path Buildings, but perhaps no one tries to park there. None of our proposals would affect the present official parking spaces, and there would still be some single-yellow-line space available in the evening and at weekends. Even when a decision is made, it will be some time before any change can take place, for proposals have to go through certain legal procedures.

As an alternative to a one-way system, we could ask for traffic-calming measures, but such projects are limited by the funds available, there is already a queue, and we know that our case would not have a high priority, since the flow of traffic is not deemed to be high.

If you wish to comment, contact the Secretary of the DVA or the Department of Transportation, 18-19 Market Street EH1 1BL ("for the attention of R. Moffat").

For the junction of Sunbury Street and Sunbury Mews with Belford Road we have reminded the Department that they agreed some time ago that an improvement was desirable, probably "blisters" to make a shorter crossing for pedestrians and to prevent parking on the corners.

## THE WALKWAY

The path to Roseburn is complete, the last section taking it up to Roseburn Cliff. Downstream, work is to begin soon on the section from Canonmills to the Colonies.

The Water of Leith Conservation Trust is coordinating a bid to the Millennium Commission for a grant which would fund major improvements along the river. The main purpose is to create a continuous walking and cycling route from Balerno to Leith. Other elements will be the conservation of remaining features of industrial heritage, improvement of wildlife habitats and the establishment of a Sculpture Trail. There are even plans to build a new mill which would combine a traditional water-wheel with the latest in turbine efficiency.

Asked for comments, the Dean Village Association replied that the Walkway should **not** be promoted as a cycle way because the peace of pedestrians should not be disturbed, and one section at least — Dean Bank — cannot be made into a cycle track without destroying its character. We suggested that all the man-made stone structures should be thoroughly surveyed with a view to repairing them and maintaining them for the future. As well as the remains of mills, these include weirs, lades, fords and retaining walls on the river banks, which are very important in our area. Some of the urban sections should have lights installed, for example between the Village and Stockbridge. In some places, e.g. at St. Bernard's Well, security cameras would be appropriate.

## FINDLAY'S HOUSES

In DVN 113 we described no 3 Rothesay Terrace (Melvin House), which may become a hotel. The application for change of use is likely to come before the Planning Committee on February 14th.

When that was written, we were uncertain whether John Ritchie Findlay had lived only in no 3, which was built in 1883-5. But the view of "the Village of the Water of Leith from a window in Rothesay Terrace", painted for Findlay by Sir William Fettes Douglas, is dated 1878. The solution to the puzzle has been provided by Gavin Goodfellow: Findlay always lived at "number 3" but not always in the same house!

The pair of houses now numbered 1 and 2 were at first numbered 2 and 3. From about 1877 Findlay lived at the present number 2. Plans in 1882 show minor alterations to that house and designs by Sidney Mitchell for a new house adjoining it. Connecting doors are shown between the two, at different levels, for example to the new billiard room and to the new nursery. (J.R.F. had ten children.) The Findlays used both houses for several years, during which their address was always "number 3", although by 1885 their neighbour to the east was at "number 1". Plans submitted to the Dean of Guild Court, in 1889-90 the present no 2 was occupied by a Mrs Alexandra Balfour. Presumably the connecting doors had been blocked up and the Findlays were living entirely in the newer, grander house.

## PIGEONS

It was a resident in Well Court who wrote, after a stanza about dogs:

*There are others frequenting the Dean  
Whose droppings are just as obscene:  
Pigeons in droves  
On sills, in alcoves,  
Are using our walls as latrines*

The numerous perches, sheltered under the wide eaves, make Well Court ideal for pigeons. The Environmental Health Department cannot help. The proprietors have done nothing to keep the birds off, for example by installing wire netting. Years ago they were given information about an ingenious French device. Of course, either of these systems would cost money.

The pigeons don't nest in Well Court; they seem to use the drainage holes in retaining walls above Belford Road and below the School. (Do you know of any other places?) Can we get these holes blocked with something like scrunched up chicken wire?

A more dramatic measure has come to our attention: at a brewery in Glasgow, pigeons were homing in on the grain intake; an officer of the Scottish Wildlife Trust suggested nesting boxes for birds of prey; the hawks moved in and

effectively solved the problem, without even having to catch all the pigeons, for these birds clear off at the first sign of a raptor. We have asked if it could be done here. It seems possible, for there are kestrels and sparrow-hawks in the vicinity, which could be attracted to the right kind of nesting boxes. What do you think? Perhaps just the silhouette of a hawk would do the trick.

Two recent news reports are relevant: captive-bred hawks and eagles have been used against seagulls which infested a landfill site. A demonstration was given in Inverleith Park. It was claimed that "the regular presence of hawks and eagles in different parts of the city centre could provide a clean, humane and completely natural solution to the seagull pests. The birds of prey need not even fly: just their presence tethered in the area is enough to have gulls, and indeed, pigeons, starlings and any other sensible bird in the area heading over the horizon."(The Scotsman)

Secondly, an old lady in Croydon has been sent to prison for 56 days for refusing to stop feeding pigeons. She had been giving them 100 loaves of bread every week, and encouraging rats.

### THE DEAN CENTRE

Plans have been published for the new art gallery. We are particularly interested in the treatment of the grounds. The present indication is that staff cars and coaches will take up part of the ground occupied by our members' allotments. However, we understand that it is still intended to retain this use of the original kitchen garden. (We quoted the appreciative comments of Richard Calvoceossi and Sir Eduardo Paolozzi in DVN 113.) The landscape plan will not be fully developed until a landscape architect is appointed, and will be implemented only when funding is assured.

The new gallery will of course be linked to the existing one. The current plan shows the main pedestrian entrance immediately opposite the entrance to the Gallery of Modern Art. Under discussion is the possibility of a way through from the Dean Cemetery. This would be delightful.

### COLONEL CLAUD MOIR

This loved and respected member of our community died on September 26. Since the Moirs moved into the new Sunbury Mews in 1983, he had become well known for his public-spirited local activity, coordinating the Neighbourhood Watch and keeping his stretch of the river and its banks clear of litter and debris. (Do you remember the timber stacked with military precision under Belford Bridge?) He was a valued member of the Canongate Kirk Session and was involved with the British Legion's sheltered housing at East Craigs. We knew that he had a profound knowledge of Yugoslavia, for he spoke to the Dean Village Association about the situation there in 1992, but most of us were only vaguely aware of his distinguished career.

It surprised us to discover from an obituary that this very military figure might have remained a banker. The war changed that: he was soon in the London Scottish and then the Black Watch. After recovering from wounds sustained at El Alamein, he was posted to Palestine as training and liaison officer with the Yugoslav Forces in the Middle East. After the war he held important posts in the War Office as well as serving overseas with the Black Watch. In 1969 he became military attaché in Belgrade, where his fluency in Serbo-Croat and his ever-increasing knowledge of Yugoslavia gave him an authority which was recognised by Marshal Tito as well as by the Queen, who made him a Commander of the Victorian Order.

After retiring from that post in 1973, he spent ten years as Chief Recruiting Officer for Scotland, but his great interest in the Southern Slavs continued. After conflict broke out in their country, he mobilised help and organised convoys to carry supplies, going out with them himself on three occasions.

"His real strength, however, lay not so much in his actions as in his life and character: he was a man of integrity and wisdom, an upright man of decency and dignity, of truth and honour, freedom and courtesy".

(C.R. in The Scotsman 4.10.95)

## OTTERS

Otters are making a comeback in Lothian. In the 1950's their numbers declined severely throughout Britain, because of pollution of waterways by pesticides. A number of surveys have been conducted by the Vincent Wildlife Trust. During the first, in 1977-9, 33 river and reservoir sites in Lothian were checked, but signs of otters were found at only one of them (on the river South Esk). When the same sites were checked in 1984-5, signs were found at eight of them. Amazingly, during the third survey (1991-2), signs were found at all 33 sites. A team from the Scottish Wildlife Trust has been monitoring Lothian's otters more recently. They found that otters use the Water of Leith from Harperrig Reservoir right down to Central Edinburgh.

You need to be extremely lucky to catch sight of an otter. Their presence is usually revealed only by signs, i.e. tracks and spraints (faeces). Unlike dogs, cats and foxes, the otter has five toes on each foot; the marks of the webs are not usually seen, and the claw marks are very small. The faeces, when fresh, are black, tarry and slimy, and they have a characteristic and very persistent oily smell. With time they become pale grey and crumbly. Look for them particularly on elevated places along the banks, e.g. on rocks.

Information from "Wildlife Insite", a publication of the Lothian Biological Record Centre, April 1995.

## 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 Sylvia Bradley

22 Lynedoch Place EH3 7PY 225 2639

### SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Ordinary £ 3.00 (or £3.80 with postage)

Senior Citizen £ 1.50 (or £2.30 with postage)

Life Membership £30.00

## DIARY

We are grateful to Robert Matthew, Johnson-Marshall & Partners for allowing us to hold our next two meetings on their premises. Two members of our Association give accounts of their very different experiences:

**Tuesday February 27: "Le Havre to Marseille in a little boat."** Don Whitfield fulfilled his retirement dream by crossing France by canal and river in his 19-foot boat. He will illustrate his talk with slides of paintings by Monet and other Impressionists.

**7.30 p.m. in the Seminar Room, Miller Row.**

**Tuesday March 26: Morris Bradley — "Working with the Peace Makers".**

Few people know that, for nearly ten years, a house just outside the Village has been the informal headquarters of the *Richardson Institute for Peace Studies*, which is part of Lancaster University. Morris Bradley, its Director, spends a few days there each week, teaching and running the Institute, but also works from Lynedoch Place, together with Sylvia Bradley, the Treasurer of the DVA. Morris will describe the work of the people who have been trying to build peace processes in the most violent parts of the world, with some notable successes. He will also talk about the value of working with students from many different parts of the world who have chosen to study at the Richardson Institute, often bringing with them experiences of the horrors of war in their home countries.

**7.30 p.m. in the Seminar Room, Miller Row.**

**Monday April 29: Annual General Meeting.**

The speaker will be Councillor James Gilchrist of the new City of Edinburgh Council. A change of boundaries has brought part of the Village into the Murrayfield Ward which he represents.

**7.30 p.m. at 3 Belford Road.**