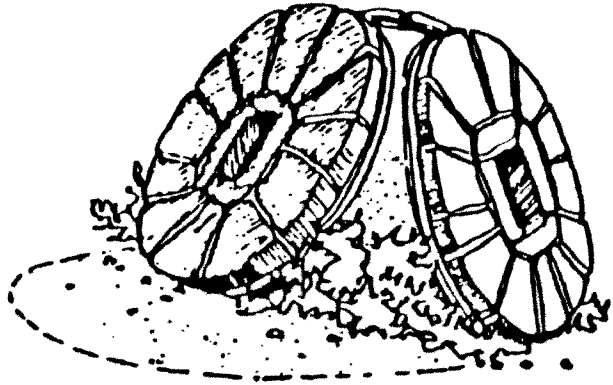


DEAN VILLAGE NEWS

No 120 Summer 1998



PEGGY VALENTINE
1920 — 1998

Did you see the red-rose flag flown from the House on Dean Bridge on the first of May? It was at half mast for Peggy's funeral. The humanist ceremony was conducted by an old friend of the Valentines, who also wrote an appreciation which appeared in *The Scotsman* on May 5.

She was born in Leith, where she was introduced to the Socialist Sunday School movement by her grandfather. At Leith Academy she impressed her teachers, who thought she should go to university; but conditions were hard in the thirties. Since Peggy's father was unemployed, she had to leave school at fifteen to work in a box factory.

In reaction to the poverty around her, she became active in the youth section of the Scottish Socialist Party. The Labour Party did not attract her at that time; instead she joined the Young Communist League, where she met her husband Findlay (at the dancing). Both were active in the Edinburgh campaign to aid the Republican government in

Spain against the Franco uprising.

They were married in 1939, soon after Findlay was called up. Their two sons were born during the war.

After the war they lived in a sub-standard flat in Stockbridge (shared toilet, no bath) before exchanging it for a pre-fab in Southhouse. When the Council replaced the pre-fabs, the tenants were rehoused in poorly built blocks of flats. The Valentines were soon on the tenants' committee which sought to get a better deal, especially after balconies fell off one of the blocks!

They were active in several left-wing campaigns in Edinburgh. Peggy became a persuasive adherent of the anti-apartheid movement; her family remember the efforts she made to ensure that not a single South African orange ever reached her kitchen.

She did join the Labour Party in the nineties, pointing out to her local branch that she was "old Labour", honouring the party's traditions.

Her experience in ironmongers' shops made her an expert on the trade, even before she spent twenty years in Gray's in George Street, where her smiling face became well known to the New Town customers.

After the Valentines moved to Belford Road in 1981, Peggy became involved in the Dean Village Association, of which she was Chairman from 1983 to 1990 and from 1994 to 1998. She contributed greatly to the spirit of the community, winning the affection as well as the respect of all.

She had known for a year that her cancer was untreatable; but she remained in apparently good health until just after the DVA meeting which she chaired on March 31. At the AGM she was appointed Honorary President, a position previously held only by our founder, Basil Skinner; but she died on April 27th.

**A Day!
Plainly A Way!
A Vehicle Away?**

*The trees,
Trunks trunks, twigs branches,
On with the breeze,
And in waves,
They breathe and heartbeat pulse,
Echoes of movement,
Pulsing in uni-s-s—s-on! . . .*

So begins a poem sent anonymously to the Secretary of the DVA. (Why?) There are 128 lines, ending with
Namaste!

MRS JEAN GIBSON 1913-1998

When Mrs Gibson died on May 14, less than a year after her great friend Ena Turner, part of the history of the Dean Village passed away with her.

Jane Sutherland Gibson was born on April 1st 1913, not in the Village but in Gorgie, the daughter of a railwayman, Andrew Douglas, and his wife, née Helen Spalding Runciman. In 1914 the family moved to Well Court, to no 17, and later to no 42.

Jean's husband, John Robertson Gibson, had attended Dean School. He was a bus conductor, then in the Royal Scots during the war. On their marriage in 1940 they took up the tenancy of no 49. Their married life was brief, for John Gibson was killed in action in France in September 1944 — the only Dean Village man who did not return from that war. His widow was left to bring up their two daughters alone in that tiny top-floor flat where she spent the remaining years of her life.

Some will remember how fiercely she defended the traditions of Well Court: wash the stair in your turn; don't put out your rubbish at the wrong time and don't dare hang out your washing out on a Sunday! (This last was a lost cause.)

She was active in the Dean Village Association, especially in its early years, and in Dean Parish Church, where she took up country dancing and badminton at an age when most people are giving up energetic activities. Her wiry figure will be missed on the Village scene.

REBECCA DAGGER

1898-1998

Our oldest member died in Dunedin, New Zealand, on March 17th, shortly after her 100th birthday.

She was a great-grand-daughter of Cochrane and Sarah Weir, who came to Bell's Mills from Ireland about 1820. One of their sons, Daniel, went out to New Zealand with the group of settlers who founded Dunedin in 1848; but his brother Joseph, Rebecca's grandfather, stayed in Scotland. Her parents were Jessie Stewart Weir and Duncan McIntosh who lived at 12 Hawthornbank Lane (the top flat).

Her husband Robert was the son of John and Bessie Dagger of 10 Dean Path. John Dagger worked for his uncle, "Cabbie Stewart". Young Robert, being daft about horses kept hanging about the stables on Bell's Brae (now Cobb Blyth's office); but his father saw there was no future in horses and apprenticed him to a frame-maker. In 1913 Robert emigrated to Dunedin, where his father had relatives. He enlisted in the Otago Regiment and fought at Gallipoli.

It was on one of his leaves that he met Rebecca McIntosh, whom he married in 1917. They sailed for New Zealand on a troopship, with their first child, in 1920. None of their numerous descendants carry the name Dagger, for they had only daughters; but there are Dagers in New Zealand: possibly some descendants of the those who went out before 1913, certainly the family of George Dagger, who emigrated in 1960, to join his brother Bob.

BESIDE THE LADE

If you go up the path beyond the hotel, you come to the weir which was the source of water-power for Bell's Mills. Few people realise that the lade still carries water along the far side, returning it to the river through a 'by-sluice' a short distance above the footbridge. To see the lade, turn off Belford Road into Belford Place and downhill towards the Sports Club. You will soon see it flowing alongside the tennis courts.

Further along there is a row of three modern brick houses, which were built on the lower part of the garden of 5 Belford Park. **The Covenanters' Tree** stood on the site of the middle one, not on the east side of the tennis courts, as stated in error in DVN 119.

No 4 Belford Park had an even bigger garden, with a tennis court and a coach house on low ground by the lade. When the property was divided, the architect Hardie Glover made a home for himself out of the coach house (at the far end of Belford Place, near the weir) and designed the modern house which stands on part of the tennis court. Its stone gable gives a deceptive air of antiquity.

It now belongs to Mr and Mrs G. Severn, who open their garden by appointment under the Scottish Gardens Scheme.

At the request of the DVA, it will be **open on Sunday July 19, 3 to 5.**

It has unusual plants, shrubs and ground cover on 1½ acres of hillside just below the Gallery of Modern Art.

OBSTRUCTIONS

A fire engine has been blocked by cars parked near the old stone bridge. This has happened more than once to the refuse collection vehicle. That is why we have asked for double yellow lines, which would make it illegal to stop there at any time.

We have also asked for double lines at the beginning of Damside, where parked cars have been impeding access to the rear of the school.

The legal procedure which is under way will give an opportunity for objections. There will be notices in the street.

We have now heard that Damside has been obstructed at Well Court by cars parked on both sides. Should we ask for double yellow lines on the south side? In the meantime, try calling the police, saying that a fire engine would be unable to get through.

REFUSE

Household refuse may now be collected at any time after 7 a.m. So people will be tempted to leave it out overnight, when the bags are liable to be torn open by animals and the contents scattered.

However, now that the new system has settled down, you may find that the collection is not made in your street until after 8 or 9 o'clock. So please avoid putting it out overnight if you possibly can. And if you miss the collection, take your bag in again rather than leave it out for several days.

PREHISTORY

For the period immediately following c. 2000 BC, centres of population have to be guessed at by the distribution of burial cists and standing stones. . . . Several cists were discovered in the middle of the last century during the building of Lennox Street and Oxford Street . . . Several urns containing cremations were unearthed during construction of the north pier of the Dean Bridge. Portable objects such as bronzes are less certain indications of areas of settlement, but it has been suggested that the axes of Late Bronze Age date that have been found along the lower reaches of the Water of Leith point to the existence of a port or small trading station somewhere between Stockbridge and the Dean Village.

Gordon S. Maxwell & J. N. Graham Ritchie: 'Prehistoric and Roman Edinburgh' in John Gifford et al. *The Buildings of Scotland—Edinburgh*, 27.

THAT RAMP

We complained that the footpath was made very narrow when an access for the disabled was created at Unison's office in Belford Road. It emerged that the minimum width for the ramp was to be 1200 mm, the minimum for a passer-by only 900 mm — even if he's in a wheelchair! However, since what is left of the footpath narrows to 850 mm, it is to be widened at the outer edge.

ON RECORD

The National Monuments Record of Scotland is the successor of the Scottish National Buildings Record, which was set up in 1941, when it was feared that much might be destroyed by enemy action. Its objective is to provide an information service based on an archive of pictures and documents relating to archaeological sites, ancient monuments and historic buildings.

The records are extensively used by official agencies responsible for the preservation of ancient and historical monuments, as well as by amenity societies, architects, educationalists, radio and television producers, and by writers and publishers of books and articles on all aspects of Scottish archaeology and architecture. There is an increasing demand for information from students and private individuals engaged in research. Photographs record major buildings like the Orphan Hospital or small items such as the gate-pier, carved with the name "Dean Studio", which was at 4 Belford Road. The former is being altered to form the new Dean Gallery; the second has been removed to a place in East Lothian, which we have been unable to identify.

Whytock & Reid's tall timber shed was photographed in great detail before it was dismantled for re-erection at Summerlee Heritage Centre at Coatbridge. A detailed survey was made of Whytock & Reid's other buildings at the same time.

There are photographs of the last sur-

viving stable in Belford Mews, at no 14. As it was sold after Mary Boyd's death, it may well be altered soon, unless the new owners have the imagination to adapt it to their use without removing the fittings — four individual stalls and a loose box, hayracks and water troughs, and arrangements for hanging saddles in the tack room.

The National Monuments Record is open to the public at 16 Bernard Terrace, off Clerk Street. (662 1456)

CLEANING UP

On the first Sunday in May the paths were already almost free of litter, thanks to those don't wait for a special occasion to pick it up. (Do you take an extra plastic bag for it when you walk your dog?)

But in the river itself there were accumulations which needed a special effort. Willing workers in wellies or waders removed a vast amount of debris from under the metal ramp at the upper weir and downstream of the Village. Others cleaned the area round the millstones and removed litter from relatively inaccessible parts of the banks.

A passer-by who asked what we were doing was told we were carrying out Community Service Orders. Maybe we should really have some convicted criminals to help next year, since not many local residents came out. (Was **everyone** at the kirk?)

A special thankyou to the volunteers from Stockbridge!

AT THE PLAYGROUND

It was probably intended that Dean Path Buildings be continued in an architecturally interesting way over the ground occupied by the playground; but about 1912 that area was dedicated as a playground, so that the building ended with a dull harled gable.

A generous individual has offered to have it painted. She has been in touch with the proprietors concerned and has consulted a planning official, who gave advice about the colour. A number of residents of the Village would have liked to be consulted, but it is clear that there would have been no agreement — not even on a neutral shade, for some are enthusiastic about red.

The Association may soon begin to improve the playground. We would like to make it more suitable for little children accompanied by their mothers. The first step is to install a bench, which will be dedicated to Peggy Valentine.

GIANT HOGWEED

There is a campaign to eliminate this alien plant along the Water of Leith not only because its sap can cause swelling but because it overwhelms native species. Spraying has begun at Currie and will be continued down to Leith. It is not a major problem on our stretch of the river, but there are a few plants. We'll try to ensure that they are treated so that they do not develop into massive colonies such as exist elsewhere.

FOR PENSIONERS

The weekly taxi from the Village to the West End has been discontinued, but could be started again if there is a demand. (Contact the Secretary.)

However, car-owners take turns to drive pensioners to Safeway at Comely Bank on Friday mornings, leaving from near 31 Belford Road at 9.45 and from West Mill a little later.

If you wish to use this service, contact Helen Zyw (225 3213), so that she can tell if two trips are needed. The pick-up points could be modified to suit you, and you would be taken all the way home with your load.

Will any new **volunteer drivers** also contact her? You would be asked to help only every six weeks or so.

MM

Histories for the Millennium

The Open University has launched this UK-wide project, which is aimed at encouraging people with little experience of research to contribute to a history of their community. Several options are suggested in order to give a focus to the research: the year 1953; the 1930s; the year 1851; a special event; the changing landscape. For each option, detailed hints are given in guidelines which also contain lots of practical advice.

What about it? If you are at all interested, ask me for a copy of the guidelines.

Dorothy Forrester.

IN THE FIFTIES

On Dean Bridge

The approach to the village from the town is by the brae to the left of the curious house on the south-west corner of the Dean Bridge. It is a quaint caricature of a fake antiquity which has become typical of our city and which is beginning to acquire some appeal of its own, despite the attempts of the architectural purists to make us functualists and Georgian-worshippers.

Gargoyles, crawlsteps, crenellated battlements, string courses, fancy chimney stacks, tiny dormers with bubble panes, the house on the Dean Bridge reminds me of a French clown . . . with bare feet, a nose which lit up, a bald dome about two feet high surrounded with a fringe of bright orange hair, high arched black eyebrows, protruding teeth, a huge dog collar, coat tails trailing on the ground and a white waistcoat to his knees. (He adds that it was partly an antique shop then.)

On Bell's Brae

*Bell's Brae is a small industrial estate off the beaten track (not an official, subsidised industrial estate, of course) [with] a *bottle exchange, a joiner's and a builder's and an electrical engineer's shop. . . .*

Legget's tannery dominates the heart of the place. . . Their main works are just up the river from Well Court. . . The present firm of Robert Legget and Sons dates from 1836, but that date is relatively late in the history of the clan of

skinnerers. . . (See DVN 79)

There are still two Robert Leggets in the business and they are the most important employing agent in the village yet. In their sheds the wool is plucked by hand from sheepskins which arrive from the slaughterhouses of Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen. The skins go to leather works and the wool goes to the hosieries. The smell of the sheepskins naturally makes itself evident . . . and it affects the smell of the river hereabout. Part of the Leggets' buildings is several hundred years old.

A Skinner

Up a stair [in the 1883 building at 8 Dean Path] I called on Archibald Downie, a veteran skinner who was born in "Broon's Coort" (where Well Court now stands) 79 years ago [i.e. in 1876]. He saw Well Court being built.

In Mr Downie's day quarrymen still lived in the village. They walked to their work not only to Craigleith but also as far as Hailes. Mr Downie's father came to the village from Dunblane to learn the mason's trade. Many of the stone cutters in the village died young through breathing the hard Craigleith stone dust, according to this keen old historian of the locality.

He experiences one difficulty common to old people who live in that hollow. He cannot face the braes. . . The village could do with a funicular railway or a wee bus.

*Albert D. Mackie
in Edinburgh To-day, March 1955.*

*Now Standard Life

DEAN VILLAGE ASSOCIATION
1998-99

Chairman: Lawrence Walker
48 Craigeith View EH4 3JY (337 1977)

Vice-Chairman: Mrs Barbara Mackay
8 Damside EH4 3BB (226 2512)

Secretary: Miss Dorothy Forrester,
13 Belford Road EH 3BL (226 5843)

Treasurer: Mrs Sylvia Bradley,
22 Lynedoch Pl. EH3 7PY (225 2639)

Other Committee Members:

Isla Calder, 38 Well Court
John Bowie Dickson, 3/4 Damside
Bernardine Cate, 16 Belford Road
Caroline Gerard, 6 Belford Mews
Barry Mackay, 3 Sunbury Place
Alison Ramsay, 27/11 H'bank Lane
Nan McLaren, 23/18 Lynedoch Pl.
Fiona Scott, 1 Well Court

Subscriptions

Life: £30 single, £45 double.

Annual: £4 single, £6 double.

Concessions: £2.

(pensioners, students, unemployed).

PENSIONERS' OUTING
to Perth
on **Wednesday August 5,**
leaving at 1.15.

Give your name to Mrs Nan MacLaren,
23/18 Lynedoch Place (225 1270).

No charge.

GUIDED WALKS

round the Village

on **Tuesday June 16**

and **Thursday July 16.**

Meet at 7.15

at the house on Dean Bridge.

Adults £1.00

Children 50p.

GARDEN OPENING

at 13 Belford Place

on Sunday July 19, from 3 to 5 p.m.

in aid of

Scotland's Gardens Scheme

and Home Link.

Adults £2.00

Children free

PROBLEMS?

Highways: Street lights, potholes etc.
Freephone CLARENCE: 0800 23 23 23
8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday to Friday.

The River and the Walkway:

Pollution: Scottish Environmental

Protection Agency 449 7296

or their 24-hour no: 449 7292.

Non-urgent matters: DVA committee
member, Fiona Scott, 220 1352.

Complaints about Street Cleaning:

DVA committee member,

Barbara Mackay 226 2512.

Special uplift of large items,

including items dumped by others:

Environmental Health 529 3030.

Water escaping from mains or houses,
and escapes of foul water:

East of Scotland Water 0345 420 420

(24 hours, 7 days)

Illegal parking: Wardens 226 7273, especially if it's in a residents' space!