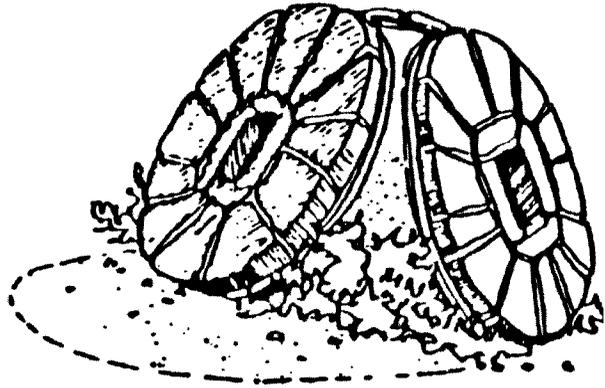


DEAN VILLAGE NEWS

No 121 Autumn 1998



THE DEAN GALLERY

The new gallery in the former Orphan Hospital* is to open on March 27.

The building was completed in 1833 to the designs of Thomas Hamilton, who was also responsible for the Royal High School at Calton Hill. It is being transformed into a multi-purpose gallery by the architects Terry Farrell & Partners. It will house a large collection of work by Sir Eduardo Paolozzi, which the sculptor generously wished to give to the city of his birth, and the library and archives of the Gallery of Modern Art. There will also be galleries for temporary exhibitions.

The Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded the Gallery of Modern Art a grant of £6.3 million, against a total cost of £9.25 million. A significant proportion of this has been earmarked for landscaping — joining up the grounds of the Dean Gallery with those of the Gallery of Modern Art across the road to create a unique, parkland setting for sculpture. (Will our allotments survive?)

* See O H 1833, in iron, above the gate near Belford Bridge.

QUEENSFERRY STREET

We try to prevent our local shopping street from being taken over by restaurants. The Council can refuse consent for a shop to be changed to non-retail use (but cannot control what kind of shop it will be). When we found that the hi-fi shop at 40A was to become an extension to Bar Roma, we protested, but were reminded that consent had been granted in 1994 for a for a restaurant or hot food take-away.

There is a current application for consent for restaurant in the two remaining shops between Bar Roma and the Granary. This would infringe the principle in the Central Edinburgh Local Plan that there should not be more than 40% of non-retail units in any section of that street.

However, the Scottish Office reporter who decided the case of no 40A wrote: 'Regarding 'the loss of yet another retail unit in Queensferry Street, . . . there are no powers to compel a retailer to rent or purchase premises at any location'. — Especially if the owner sets the rent at a level which only pub or restaurant can pay?

A LOST OPPORTUNITY

The proposals omit vitally important requirements for any development of this site, [including] the provision of some open space by the river. . . The removal of the eastern block by the river [nos 17 to 22 Hawthornbank Lane] would . . . allow an attractive riverside public open space to be created, for the use of local residents (including children) and users of the Water of Leith Walkway. Apart from the paved area off Miller Row, this is the last opportunity of creating attractive public open space in the Dean Village.

The Cockburn Association, commenting on the plans for High Green in 1988.

CABLE TV

A company with a licence from the Department of Trade and Industry has the right to dig up the streets to install cables, but also an obligation to make their service available to most of the houses in their franchise area.

It is more than four years since United Artists dug up Sunbury Place. We find to our amazement that Telewest, who have taken over the licence, refuse to provide a service. We may take this up with the DTI.

Back in 1992 United Artists contacted the Dean Village Association, giving the impression that they were about to install their cables in the Village. Telewest now say that they have no plans at present for further cabling in Edinburgh.

PLAYGROUNDS

As reported in DVN 120, we hope to improve the playground at the corner of Dean Path and Damside, in such a way that it will be suitable for little children, rather than big boys who kick balls against the gable, to the annoyance of residents within. In the meantime it does at least provide space for play, which is not the case for the tiny areas labelled 'playgrounds' in the plans for the modern developments in Damside and Hawthornbank.

In Damside there was a sandpit, which has been paved over. At the foot of Hawthornbank, near the footbridge, it was apparently intended that there should be a swing, since the ground was covered with bark as a soft surface for children to fall on.

Since we thought it would never be a playground, the Association considered how that dank corner might be improved. Planting would probably not be a success, for there is too much shade and there seems to be the hard surface of the old street underneath. We devised a plan to install an attractive feature — a millstone from Bell's Mills House.

However, when we put this idea to residents in Hawthornbank, we found that at least one family there wants to have a swing installed. Since the ground is owned by the proprietors of nos 17 to 27, we must leave it to them.

We have asked the Council to cut back drastically the willow trees which cause such dense shade. That alone would be an improvement.

WHEELIE BINS FOR ALL?

You may have heard that the Council wants to introduce wheelie bins in tenement areas. The DVA was invited to comment on the ones which have been installed in an area of Newington bounded by Causewayside, Salisbury Place, Dalkeith Road and Hope Park.

They are not for individual tenements and can be used by passers-by as well as by residents. Some are on pavements, others on the roadway. They are attached to steel poles, which are fixed to the ground. The Council has undertaken to empty them daily if necessary.

The Cockburn Association has sent a damning report on this pilot scheme to the Head of Planning. They point out that most of the area in which these bins may be installed are Conservation Areas, for which the Council has a duty to preserve and enhance their character or appearance.

They object to the way that bins on pavements occupy about a third of their width. The mass of the bins, which are nearly five feet high, is overpowering. The mechanisms for fixing them to the street are brutal and unsightly, and will appear even more so after they have become dirty and rusty. This also applies to the bins: once their nice shiny green paint has been scratched off through wear and tear and vandalism, the combination of the resulting rust and the inevitable runs of liquid from degrading refuse will reduce them to very shabby eyesores and a disgrace to the City. Moreover they have already

been targeted by bill-posters and graffiti artists.

Communal bins encourage people to throw out more rubbish; less care will be taken to seal bin-bags, if indeed they are used at all; people will be less likely to crush plastic bottles and rinse out containers than when they had to store rubbish in their own flats. Result — smells, especially in warm weather. And the logistics of cleaning the bins — the Council's responsibility — will be very difficult.

The Dean Village Association too has criticised the bins and the fixing system. They could not be installed without breaching the Council's duty to protect and enhance the appearance of our area. We share the concern of the Cockburn Association that the bins will deteriorate badly in use, and that unpleasant smells will develop. At present refuse left out at the wrong time can be unsightly, but residents can do something about that, by reminding neighbours of the days for collection, by identifying the culprits and so on. It is a short-term and intermittent problem. Communal bins would be there all the time and we would be helpless to mitigate any nuisance.

What do you think? Go and look at the bins in Newington. Would you like to have similar ones in your street so that you could get rid of your refuse every day? Can you identify acceptable sites for them?

TWENTIETH-CENTURY LIVES

J.C. Fraser 1902 - 1998

Mr Fraser was born in the tenement known as Legget's Land, 34 Damside (on the right, west of the recently renovated building). He spent most of his life in England but often paid nostalgic visits to the Village, where we met him in 1985.

A letter from him was printed in DVN 82. He described horse-drawn lorries bringing loads of dripping sheep-skins to the Tannery. He attended the Cathedral Mission at the foot of Bell's Brae and in Well Court Hall the Band of Hope (a temperance organisation for children). From Dean School he went on at the age of twelve to Gilmore Place School (later known as Darroch). His first job was taking Mr Crichton's dinner up to the cab stand in Belford Road for sixpence a week. That cab stand is still marked by C S 6 in brass letters in the kerb near Douglas Gardens Mews, where there is now a parking meter. The cabs there were owned by a Mr Fraser who had a wooden office at Belford Bridge. (Was young Fraser a relative?)

After working for the SMT, he joined the Scots Guards and served in China. He did guard duty at royal palaces and at the Bank of England, and took part in the Trooping of the Colour.

His ashes have been scattered from the bridge in the heart of the Village, of which he wrote: 'The Dean is a very special place to me.'

George Smith 1903 — 1998

This stalwart supporter of our Association died on May 11, at the age of 94.

His long connection with the Dean began when he was sent to the village school from his home in William Street. At fifteen he was apprenticed as a cabinet-maker to Whytock & Reid, where he remained for fourteen years until he had an accident at work. When he returned after recuperating from its effects, he was sacked.

The latter part of his working life was spent in the building trade. For a while he worked for the Southern Hospitals Group — 'I've been in every mortuary in Edinburgh' — but he finished his career as Senior Clerk of Works for the City Architect's Department.

When he married, he moved to Grindlay Street and later to Colinton. George's interest in local history was evident in the Colinton Literary Society, of which he was President. After retiring he became very active as a Voluntary Guide to the Royal Mile, wearing his kilt of course, as he did when he took visitors on guided walks round the Dean Village.

He spent his last year in Ashley Grange Nursing Home, where (his daughter says) he was very happy and continued to tell his stories of the past. He can still be heard telling them, for he was one of the old people whose memories of the Village were recorded a few years ago.

FROM EDINBURGH TO OTAGO — a nineteenth-century life

David Miller, blacksmith, was born in Canonmills in 1798. After serving his apprenticeship in East Calder, he returned to Edinburgh and worked for a time as a journeyman, then left to set up in business on his own account, although his employer had offered to make him a partner rather than lose his services. Millar said one partner was enough: he had married Catherine Marshall in 1825. He had probably met her during his apprenticeship, for she came from West Lothian.

By 1828 they were living in Mitchell's Land, Dean Path, where their seven children were born between 1828 and 1841. The Incorporation of Baxters had appointed David Millar as blacksmith to the Water of Leith Mills (i.e. the mills in what we now call the Dean Village). He held that post he went to New Zealand with his family in 1853.

One of his descendents there has sent the story of David Millar's life, including the obituary from which we give quotations in italics.

In the Dean Village *he started and carried on a Summer and Winter Yearly Society¹, whereby many of the sick and poor were relieved; but he eventually made up his mind to settle in Otago, induced, no doubt, through a wish to have all his family beside him, one of whom had landed in Otago so early as December 1849.²*

In Otago Mr Millar used the skills he had developed in Scotland, for he

worked in Fairbairn's Mill, and *gained the respect and esteem of the many with whom he came into contact, his private and business character being of that Christian nature, which may be summed up thus: He was a good husband, a good father, a good citizen, and in all his conversation through life evinced his faith in Christ.*

He died in Dunedin 1878.

1. A friendly society?
2. Dunedin had been founded in the Otago district in 1848. The first group of settlers included Daniel Weir and his family from Bell's Mills. (See DVN 87).

MITCHELL'S LAND in Dean Path

This was the name of the tenement in which David Millar lived in the first half of the nineteenth century, when houses were not yet numbered. We have been told that it still exists.

Do any of the present proprietors of
6, 10, 27-29 or 39 Dean Path
have this name in their title deeds?

WET, WET, WET!

Of all the wet Sundays this past summer, July 19th may have been the wettest. That is when we had arranged for a remarkable garden in Belford Place to be open in aid of Scotland's Gardens Scheme. (You may have seen it on 'The Beechgrove Garden'.) We hope that Mr and Mrs Severn will give us another opportunity next year.

BELL'S MILLS

We have already printed, in DVN 119, one description of Bell's Mills in 1944. Another account, dating from the same year, has been brought to our attention.

The other day I watched the iron shaft of the old mill wheel being removed from Bell's Mills. . . The great shaft, weighing about three tons, is as perfect to-day as when it was forged 130 years ago in the Cramond Iron Works, which then stood between Peggy's Mill and the mouth of the River Almond. But the mill wheel which it has served so faithfully has become worn out, and it was recently decided to install a water turbine. The shaft was hoisted on to the lorry for transport to Coatbridge, where it will act as a shaft for a steam hammer. . .

As you cross the Belford Bridge you can look over its parapet, and there, revolving steadily and efficiently, is the mill's second water wheel, still used to grind wood flour for the manufacture of linoleum, bakelite and plastics. This wheel is known to be almost as old as its worn-out sister. Its teeth are coated with moss, but it aye keeps turning, driving the machinery.

Mr Allan Walker, owner of the old rustic mill under the bridge, is the real story-book conception of a 'jolly miller'. His eyes twinkle merrily as he watches the wheel go round, making his wealth. The only difference is that Mr Walker does not live by himself. The delightful old house which overlooks the mill is

shared by his wife and two sons. Allan, aged 18, helps his father with the work, and some day will become a miller too. Lawrence, who is fourteen, keeps rabbits and helps his mother with the hens. Allan loves to talk about his mill and the house he lives in. With pride he relates how in 1600 Walter Bell obtained a charter from the monks of Holyrood to manufacture meal, and the mill was built. In 1799 Provost Nisbet of Dean House sold the mill, but his coat-of-arms can still be seen on its wall. From time to time the walls of the mill have been restored, but essentially it's still the same place.

About the year 1800 meal milling was changed to flour milling when wheat first came to Scotland. . . In 1890 Sir James Steele¹ bought the mill and installed Allan's father Gideon, as tenant, and about a year later the mill began to turn out wood flour.

Going through the house, I was attracted by the size and shape of the living rooms . . . Windows on the ground floor have wooden shutters, backed by sheet iron. These were no doubt closed when food was scarce, as the miller of earlier days believed, rightly no doubt, that he would be the one on whom the public would vent its wrath when hungry.²

Here then in the heart of Edinburgh, a stone's throw from the activity of Princes Street, you can pause and watch the old mill wheel chugging and dripping and grinding its 'floor', performing its humble duty in its quiet, sheltered retreat. 'Keep her going', said

Mr Walker. 'That's the secret. Never let her stop. She's bonny with a' that moss on her, but never let her stop.'
Edinburgh Evening News, 25.3.1944,
with corrections by Lawrence Walker.

1. Lord Provost Sir James Steele bought the mills from Herdman, who moved to a modern mill at Haymarket.

2. *A number of dissolute disorderly persons, under pretence that great Quantities of Meal etc had been hoarded up, assembled tumultuously last Thursday and, proceeding to the house of Charles Sawers at Bell's Mills, broke open his house and granaries, carried off some bolls of victual and demolished several things in his house.*

(Caledonian Mercury, October 27, 1740, quoted at greater length in DVN 89).

So it is not surprising that reinforced shutters were installed in the new house which was built in the 1780s.

WHO ARE THE HOMELESS?

George McArthur says that those who sleep rough or in hostels are only 5% of the problem. There are many others — people who have left tied houses, women fleeing from violent partners, youngsters sleeping on the floor in friends' flats, people who have been made redundant and can't keep up the payments on their mortgages. . .

The Edinburgh Churches Millennium Project aims to help all categories of homeless people to make a fresh start. George McArthur will speak about the Project on 28 September. See DIARY.

COLOURS

Recent comments on that gable* have been enthusiastic. It tones well with the **red** pantiles in Dean Path. As for the rest of you, don't worry: it will mature, as has happened to the **yellow** of Damside, which seemed almost garish when it was new. The '**Georgian white**' on 20-22 Damside looks good but may not last so well.

The side and back walls of the QMW warehouse are a beautiful **red**.

Baxters' Tolbooth, at the foot of Bell's Brae would be vastly improved by **COLOUR**. That's up to the owners.

*The gable was painted on the initiative of an individual resident, who has paid the entire four-figure cost. If you would like to make a contribution, send it to the Treasurer of the DVA, who will pass it on to her.

A VILLAGE VIEW

A new postcard of the village is on sale in the shop in Belford Road, at 50p — but it is big and beautiful!

AT DRUMSHEUGH,

the green man no longer appears **automatically** for pedestrians who want to cross Drumsheugh Gardens.

So press the button!

A CEILIDH

in St Bride's Centre, at 7.30 on Saturday December 5th, in aid of the Water of Leith Conservation Trust.

Tickets £5 (£4), from the Trust at 24 Lanark Road EH14 1TQ (455 7367).

**DEAN VILLAGE ASSOCIATION
1998-99**

Chairman: Lawrence Walker
48 Craighleith 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)

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Life: £30 single, £45 double.

Annual: £4 single, £6 double.

Concessions: £2.

(pensioners, students, unemployed).

DIARY

The **Monday evening meetings** listed below will take place in the rooms of the Edinburgh Society of Musicians, in **Drumsheugh Toll, 3 Belford Road.**

Monday, September 28 at 7.30:
George McArthur:
A FRESH START
FOR THE HOMELESS

Monday, October 26 at 7.30:
Melanie Findlay: OTTERS

Monday, November 16at 7.30:
Willam Smith:
EDINBURGH CINEMAS

In December (date not yet fixed)
CAROLS IN THE PLAYGROUND

DOORS OPEN DAY — Saturday 26th September

Sixty-four buildings in Edinburgh will be open without charge,
mostly **between 10 am and 5 pm**, among them

5 Charlotte Square — the office of the Scottish National Trust,

10 Charlotte Square — the Crown Estate Office,

13 Randolph Crescent — The French Institute,

4 Randolph Cliff — home and practice of Murray McGrath, optometrist
and the interior of St Bernard's Well.

The following will be open **between 10 am and 2 pm only**:—

Well Court Hall — Jonathan Speirs & Associates

The stable and tack room at 14 Belford Mews, by courtesy of Professor Paul Jowett and Kathy Patterson.

This last is a late addition, not in the published list. For a copy, send a large s.a.e. to the Cockburn Assocn., 55 High Street, Edinburgh EH1 1SR.