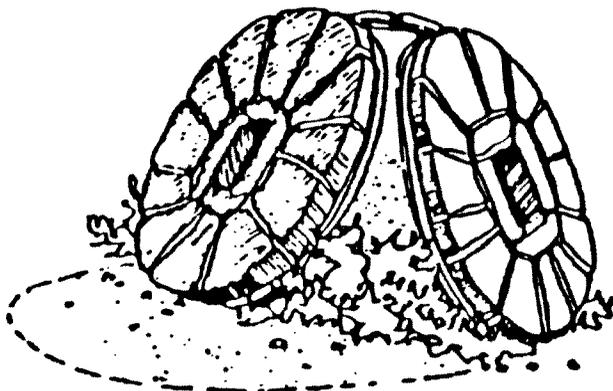


DEAN VILLAGE NEWS



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FLATS AT BELL'S MILLS ?

In *DVNews 133* we described a plan to build 24 flats between the Granary and 'the orchard' and close to Bell's Mills House, urging our readers to lodge their objections.

The Royal Fine Art Commission for Scotland recommended refusal:

The southern part of the site . . . lies in full view of the walkway . . . where it is particularly special because it is not overlooked by waterside developments. The important contribution that the undeveloped nature of the site makes to this important public amenity is rightly acknowledged in its designation within the Local Plan as being of high landscape value. The current proposals, with two buildings coming within 6m of the water's edge and set well in front of the adjacent Granary, would be clearly visible from the walkway and detrimental to the experience of it. The two buildings which are set behind the Mill Lade would perhaps have a lesser impact on the walkway, but their proximity to the Listed Bell's Mills House and excessive height in relation to it and to the Category A Listed

Granary and other neighbouring developments would render them also unacceptable. The introduction of a large area of tarmac between the buildings in the centre of the site would cause further offence to the existing landscape of the Water of Leith.

The Commission recommends refusal of this application. It would do irremediable damage to an area of high landscape value, a Conservation Area and a World Heritage Site. The area to the south of the Mill Lade must be protected as an integral part of the landscape setting of a valuable public amenity. Development at a smaller scale might be possible on the north part of the site, but only if it could be demonstrated that the views from the river and the setting of Listed buildings would not be spoiled and that it would be sensitive to its unique location in the river valley, to the existing landscape and to the urban structure.

(RFAC 5.9.02)

The plan was later modified, but the Commission considered that the

amendments did not address any of the issues they had raised. They noted that the architects, Farningham McCreadie, had written that, if the current application were refused consent, the Menzies Hotel, who own the site, would complete the hotel extension along the water front to designs which were granted planning permission* in 1987; but that was before the site was identified as of high landscape value.

(RFAC 10.12.02)

*Planning consent ceases to be valid if work has not begun within five years. In this case some very minor work was done just before five years were up. We have argued that this should be disregarded because it was trivial and the result now almost imperceptible. However, what was planned in 1987 was much less massive than the blocks of flats which are now proposed.

Listed Building Consent has been granted for the re-alignment of the garden wall and railings of Bell's Mills House, but work on this must not begin until other necessary consents have been obtained.

OR A WILDLIFE GARDEN?

'The Bell's Mills Project'

This project was conceived in response to the overgrown state of the site, by local residents who feared that it could become a target for the creeping development edging along the river.

Working with a landscape architect, Peter McGowan, they formed their own

plan to protect and enhance the site their aim being to preserve all of its heritage interest and to retain its role in the landscape of the Water of Leith.

Their objectives are

To conserve the mill lade, the remains of former mill buildings and other features of industrial archaeological interest

To preserve trees, shrubs and other planting of value and to bring it to a maintainable condition

To develop the value of the site for wildlife and to enhance the species diversity of the Water of Leith valley,

To provide an attractive and safe public open space accessible from the walkway and neighbouring communities

To encourage educational use by on- and off-site interpretation

To develop new features based on the resources of the site which add to its interest and attraction.

A preliminary design incorporates the following features:

A path circuit through the garden, linked to the existing footbridge and a new footbridge

The mill lade restored and the remains of mill buildings stabilised

Seating areas beside the Water of Leith and mill lade

New planting to complement existing trees and shrubs

Wildflower meadows

A mill-wheel or generator on the lade.

(Based on an article by David Weir
Newsletter 52)

OTHER PLANNING MATTERS

In Sunbury: Consent has been granted for 16 flats on the riverside site, but this would require the demolition of 'Belford Lodge', for which consent has not been granted (at least not yet). It was designed in the early 1970s, by Henry Wylie & Partners, as showrooms and offices for Whytock & Reid, but it later became a private house.

12 Belford Mews: The garage has been made into a very small flat without planning consent for this change of use. The DVA will oppose a retrospective application: there was the satisfactory combination of a flat with a garage; we don't want two flats with two cars in the street.

Belford Church: There has so far been no decision about the installation of radio antennae in the tower.

Several months ago the low wall and railings on Belford Road were badly damaged by a vehicle. Although the church is listed, we found that the Planning Department had no power to insist on a repair, but it has now been done, and done well.

EDINBURGH CITY CAR CLUB

is for people who need a car only occasionally, and for them membership makes economic sense. For us the nearest vehicles are in Stockbridge. For full information phone 466 8161, or E-mail edinburgh@smartmoves.co.uk or go to www.edinburghcarclub.co.uk

AWARDS for the UNQUALIFIED!

The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland are giving 'Millennium Awards' which enable people to study their local environment and devise and implement proposals for change.

The projects could be

Visual, physical or managerial improvements to the local streetscape or countryside

New facilities or services, or guides to enhance knowledge of the locality, such as historical, architectural or nature trails.

You can apply if

- ▶ You are over eighteen
- ▶ You are a member of the local community living in or familiar with the area
- ▶ You do not have a professional qualification in the built or natural environment

'Linked Awards' are available for 2 or 3 persons working on a larger project.

Funding can include 100% of the costs, training, mentoring (by an architect or other professional), courses, equipment, office costs etc. and even travel and accommodation.

The criteria include 'evidence of community interest and support'; so it would be useful to discuss your ideas with the Secretary of the DVA, who has more information than is given here.

Or contact The Awards Administrator
RIAS Millennium Awards
The Lighthouse,
11 Mitchell Lane
GLASGOW G1 3NY

THE RIVER IS CLEAN —

The high quality of the water enables a large number of invertebrate and vertebrate species to thrive. Sixty species of invertebrates have been found upstream of Balerno, including mayflies, stoneflies, beetles, molluscs, worms and leeches. Further downstream the invertebrates are still numerous but are biased towards species more tolerant of pollution, particularly molluscs, worms and leeches.

There are large populations of fish, including brown trout, stone loach, stickleback, eel, perch and pike. The last two find their way in from the Union Canal. A few sea trout and salmon manage to come in from the sea through Leith Docks.

The average size of trout increases from the upstream reaches to the slower-moving pools of the downstream end. About 2,000 young ones are put into the river every year to supplement those produced by natural spawning in the tributaries above Balerno.

The abundance of plant and invertebrate life provides ideal habitats for a large variety of birds. Over eighty species have been recorded in the wooded valley between Juniper Green and Slateford. Dippers and grey wagtails like fast flowing water and a stony river bed, while the moorhens and mute swans prefer the deeper and more tranquil waters at Bonnington and Leith.

(Adapted from a leaflet published by the Water of Leith Conservation Trust.)

— BUT NOT NATURAL!

In our area its channel has been much modified. It is enclosed by stone walls and one can see signs of the two sewers below the bed of the river. The ford beside the steel footbridge was intact twenty years ago, but has been damaged and altered.

Then there are the caulds (i.e. weirs).

1. The cauld for Bell's Mills still directs water into the lade which flows between the sports club and the lower part of Belford Place and returns its water to the river through a 'by-sluice', a short distance upstream of the hotel.

2. From the cauld just above the Village a lade (in Scots a 'dam') used to flow along the line of Damside to West Mill.

3. The cauld below West Mill was the source of a great lade which powered mills from here to Canonmills.

The Association has asked for the last two to be listed. Although the visible masonry may date from only about 1800, they are no doubt much older. During the centuries they have changed the levels of the water and of the river banks. If the lower one should collapse, the river would revert to its natural, much lower, level. This would have a dire effect on the setting of Well Court, the listed buildings adjoining the bridge, and the classic view to Dean Bridge.

The caulds used to be repaired from time to time by Edinburgh Corporation. Can the City Council be persuaded to accept responsibility for them, now that the caulds no longer provide power for the town's mills?

AT ST BERNARD'S WELL

We supported a local resident's appeal for a ramp which would lead from the level of Saunders Street to the upper path, for she found it difficult to get a double push-chair* up the steps. This work has been done, with money from the Millennium Fund, by the Water of Leith Conservation Trust, who are improving the areas upstream and downstream of the Well.

The Trustees had feared that increases in costs for other parts of their Millennium Project might prevent them carrying out the work at St Bernard's Well, but the Millennium Commission agreed to grant a further £37,000, on condition that the City match this. The Council will make their contribution in kind, by carrying out landscaping and planting over an extended period.

* The twins are now fifteen.

FLOOD PREVENTION

The Council's plans (described in *DVN* 131 & 132) have been submitted to the Scottish Executive, who will consider the proposals and ensure that there are no public objections before giving the go-ahead. This process can take some months, but the Council has built this into its time-table; so construction could begin in October. Formal objections would lead to a public enquiry and a delay of up to two years, but the extensive consultations which have taken place have addressed as many concerns as possible.

THE MILLS AND THE BRAE

'BELL'S BRAE is so named on *Ordnance Survey* 1852, which also shows BELL'S BRAES . . . opposite BELL'S MILLS. . . It is possible that the Bell's Brae name has been transferred but, on the other hand, millers named Bell were associated not only with Bell's Mills but also with the town's mills in the Water of Leith village: *Town Council Minutes* of 1525 record Adam Bell as a lease holder, and in 1598 Clement Bell was appointed 'ordinary miller at the town's mills here.'

(S. Harris: *Place Names of Edinburgh*.)

It has been argued that the Bell's Brae was so called because it led to Bell's Mills, but this seems unlikely. A map of 1759 shows the only approach to Bell's Mills as being along the line of Palmerston Place and Douglas Gardens; later maps show an alternative route via Belford Road. There is no sign of a road from the foot of Bell's Brae to Bell's Mills, even before the ground level was raised in Sunbury. D.L.F.

A ROAD IN THE RIVER?

One comment on the plans for flood control mentioned 'an old cobbled stock road in the river between Falshaw Bridge and the Dean Bridge.'
A road for cattle? Surely not! Where a man-made surface forms the bed of the river, it covers the sewers laid beneath it in the nineteenth century.

OPEN-AIR THEATRE

The Water of Leith is to be the backdrop for a ground-breaking piece of theatre this summer when the Theatre Workshop performs its annual community play along its banks.

The audience will walk along the waterway, beginning in Stockbridge and ending up in a finale near the Gallery of Modern Art. This is the first time the Theatre Workshop has ventured outdoors to stage its community play. . .

They hope to pull off some awe-inspiring special effects, including cast members abseiling down the 130 ft drop of Thomas Telford's Dean Bridge.

The writer and directors plan to integrate stories from around the world and to involve different ethnic communities in Edinburgh.

The artistic director, Robert Rae, said: "We have a large company and a spectacular setting. We will be using the natural environment as much as possible and finding exciting ways to tell the stories. . .

"There will probably be around 100 people involved. If you have a cast that big, you don't have any room for the audience inside the theatre building.

"The idea is to have five or six small plays along the way and a spectacular one at the end.

"It will give us the scope for a range of theatrical effects. You could have 40 people appearing on the opposite bank — but you can also have people looking at something very small — like a candle burning in a disused window."

The directors also hope to bring in people with specialist knowledge and skills who will be willing to take part in some death-defying stunts.

Mr Rae said: "We would love to have people abseiling down from the bridge. We always try to give the participants as wide a range of theatrical experience as possible."

The Scotsman, January 27.

OBSERVED IN 2002

Redwings, bull-finches, wild geese, wrens, robins, blackbirds, thrushes, chaffinches, dunnock, bluetits, coal tits, long-tailed tits, a grey wagtail, a moorhen, a goosander, herons, kingfishers, mute swans nesting near the Gallery of Modern Art. There were more swifts than swallows. On one occasion six swifts harassed a sparrow-hawk and drove it away. A heron was seen catching an eel, but having difficulty in swallowing it. The eel wound itself round the bill and neck of the heron, which finally freed itself and swallowed the eel.

A peacock butterfly, a red admiral, a swallow-tailed moth, pipistrelle bats, a fox and badgers. The latter frequent the areas around the Dean Gallery and the Gallery of Modern Art, where they are seen by security staff at night on their screens. [I think that I have seen a badgers' sett there. D.L.F.]

(Based on an article by Charles Melville in the Newsletter of the Douglas Crescent Gardens Association.

DRUMSHEUGH TOLL

There used to be a real toll-house here, (smaller than the present building) for, until the Dean Bridge was opened in 1832, the main road to Queensferry ran along what is now called Belford Road, crossing the river at Bell's Mills. Part of the toll-house was incorporated into the present building in 1891.

The architect was George Washington Browne, who also designed the Central Public Library on George IV Bridge and the Hospital for Sick Children. Here he was acting for two clients.

The three storeys below Belford Road were for James Stewart, who ran a cab-hiring business from his house on Dean Bridge. His horses were stabled in the two lowest floors, entered from Bell's Brae.

The two storeys above Belford Road were a house and studio for the artist Charles Martin Hardie, whose best-known painting depicts the meeting of Burns with the young Walter Scott.

The steep site is brilliantly exploited. It is stolid and cosy towards Belford Road, with broad eaves, a squat crenellated tower, a four-light half-timbered bay window to the west and a canopy over the door in the angle; highly picturesque towards Bell's Brae, with more half-timbering, a big studio-windowed gable, a red sandstone octagonal turret and a dizzily elevated balcony. . . The detail has much charm, e.g. the cement basecourse stamped diaper-fashion with a Gothic capital H, the beautiful leaded glass and a modicum of ironwork. (John

Gifford et al.: *The Buildings of Scotland — Edinburgh*, 1984)

The base-course also has thistles for Hardie and eagles for his American (or Polish?) wife.

The house is now in three parts. The eastmost section, which includes Hardie's north-facing studio, is a separate dwelling. The rest of the building was divided between the Edinburgh Society of Musicians (upstairs) and the Waddell School of Music (downstairs), when they moved from Thistle Street, but the ground floor is now the office of the Ombudsman for Housing Associations.

The staircase is in its original position, but it lacks character; it used to be open on the right-hand side to the handsomely panelled main entrance hall. It is now reached from the side door, which was no doubt the servants' entrance.

OFFICE TO LET

The building on Bell's Brae was built in 1881 for 'Cabbie' Stewart, as stables according to *Buildings of Scotland — Edinburgh*; but it seems to have been his coach-house, his horses being stabled across the street in the premises now occupied by Cobb Blyth Associates. Then the building became 'the bottle exchange' (for milk bottles? lemonade bottles? beer bottles?), before being converted into an office which was occupied first by Robert Marshall Johnson-Marshall and more recently by Standard Life.

DOMESTIC REFUSE

is collected only
on Tuesday and Friday mornings.

If you put it out on other days,
you will be giving the Council
**AN EXCUSE TO INSTALL
HUGE COMMUNAL BINS
IN OUR STREETS**

*We may all think that living in a
Conservation Area will protect us from
kerb-side bins, but do we really have to
provide the Council with ammunition
for their case? The equation is simple:*

*Bin Bags Out Early = Bin Bags Ripped
by Cats, Dogs, Foxes and Rats =
Rubbish on Our Streets = Ammunition
for the Council to Introduce Kerbside
Bins = Loss of up to six Parking Spaces
per Average Street.*

*(Letter in Stockbridge and New Town
Independent.)*

THE SHOPPING RUN

is much appreciated by elderly residents
who are taken to Safeways at Comely
Bank on Friday mornings. There is also
a good butcher near by.

If you would like to be taken,
but are not yet on our list,
contact Mrs Barbara Mackay, 226 2512.

If you are willing to drive,
let Mrs Mackay know. She would ask
you to do so no more than once a
month. Would you be willing to make
two trips if the number of passengers
goes up?

DIARY

Monday 17 February at 7.30 pm:

An illustrated talk by

TIANA SIDEY

Remarkable Edinburgh Women
in Drumsheugh Toll, 3 Belford Road.

On Sunday 16 March, we shall have
the exclusive use of the pool in
DRUMSHEUGH BATHS
from 4 to 5 pm.

Come for a swim (or just to watch).
We can stay on in the bar, which
overlooks the pool, to have a coffee or
a drink and view the current exhibition
of paintings.
When you come, please contribute
£1.00 each towards the charge which
the DVA will pay to the Baths Club.

THE COUNCIL ELECTION

will take place on May 1st.

**The candidates for Dean Ward
are being invited to speak to voters
in 3 Belford Road,
on Monday 7 April at 7.30.**

As we go to press, the following have
agreed to come. There may be others.

Lezley Cameron (Labour)

Tom Ponton (Liberal Democrat)

Bill Stevenson (Conservative).

Dean Village Association
Secretary and Editor:

Miss Dorothy Forrester

13 Belford Road EH4 3BL

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