



# DEAN VILLAGE NEWS

No 137 Autumn 2003

## TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT in CENTRAL EDINBURGH

At the inquiry the Reporters were convinced that the main elements of the Council's scheme were essential and urgent, in order to contain the growth in traffic and improve conditions for everyone. To send the whole package back to the drawing board would be a totally retrograde step.

**At the West End:** Hope Street will be closed. Buses and taxis will go directly from Queensferry Street into Princes Street or Lothian Road. Other traffic will reach Lothian Road via Drumshough Gardens or Melville Street, Manor Place and Shandwick Place.

**Pedestrian Crossings:** Streets where traffic is increased will be safe for pedestrians only if there are clearly identified opportunities to cross without undue delay, and the position made unmistakably clear to drivers.

Belford Road will be closed at its east end to all but emergency vehicles and cyclists. This junction has a bad record for accidents caused by traffic from Belford Road merging with traffic flowing over Dean Bridge. A turning circle will be created. Access from Douglas Gardens will be facilitated by 'deflection islands' and new lane markings. The Reporters urge that these improvements be implemented as soon as possible.

A main route from Queensferry Road to Lothian Road will be via Belford Bridge, Douglas Gardens, Palmerston Place and Shandwick Place or Morrison Street.

**Bell's Brae/Dean Path:** The use of this route as a rat run will be prevented by a ban on left turns into Ravelston Terrace, except for emergency vehicles and cycles. Only cyclists will be allowed to turn right at the top of Bell's Brae.

**Randolph Crescent:** The Reporters did not accept the Council's plan, which would impose unacceptable local difficulties without reducing the flow of traffic through an important part of the World Heritage Site. It would be better to retain the present direction of flow, with some regulation, by traffic lights, of the volume of traffic; but they would prefer a radical approach to remove through traffic from the Great Stuart Street route.

**Further west:** It was recommended that the largely residential area between Palmerston Place and Magdala Crescent be given as much protection from through traffic as the Second New Town.

**No alternative:** Although there will be more traffic in some streets, to do nothing would not improve things for residents. Increasing levels of traffic would cause more congestion, pollution and visual intrusion. The proposals will go some way to forestalling that and create an opportunity to improve the public realm.

**The next step:** In September the Council is likely to give their approval to the report, accepting its recommendations.

**The time-scale:** There will be a series of procedures, including detailed design, before work is carried out on the ground during a six-month period. Then the whole scheme will take effect on one day, probably in 2006.

## AT BELL'S MILLS

The proposal<sup>1</sup> to build 24 flats has been refused consent, because it infringed several policies in the Local Plan for Central Edinburgh:

The development

— would result in the loss of trees and other vegetation which contribute to the character and appearance of this part of the Dean Conservation Area;

— fails to take account of the area's special interest and to preserve or enhance its character and appearance;

— would be an intrusive feature in the Water of Leith valley;

— would result in the loss of open space that contributes to the character and amenity of the area;

— would adversely affect the amenity or recreational value of the Water of Leith valley and its Walkway;

— would adversely affect wildlife and its habitat within the site and the adjoining Urban Wildlife Site; and

— it fails to preserve the historic fabric and special character of the World Heritage Site, contrary to the Council's non-statutory Manifesto for the Site.

'Bell's Mills Ltd' will appeal against the decision.<sup>2</sup> If that is unsuccessful, they threaten to act upon an existing consent for an extension to the hotel; but that dates from 1987, before the adoption of the policies quoted above and before the inscription of the World Heritage Site of Central Edinburgh.

1. See *DVN* 133, 135, 136.

2. *EE News* 12.8.03

## THE WEST END POST OFFICE MAY CLOSE!

According to the official announcement it is necessary to ensure that *every branch makes the best possible use of resources while ensuring that customers can still easily access [their] products and services.* . . .

*. . . [Due to] falling customer numbers, increasing running costs and more customer choice about how their benefits are paid. . . we must urgently look at how best to improve our cost effectiveness, whilst maintaining a high level of service . . .*

A high level of service? In the next sentence they foresee only 'an acceptable level of service' at Frederick Street, West Maitland Street and Tollcross. These, we are told, are 0.5 or 0.6 miles from Hope Street, but they are further from where most of us live! There is also the sub-office at Comely Bank, but might it be closed in the future?

The decision to close the Hope Street office next February may not be final. You can raise any issues which you would like to be considered by writing, **before September 19,**

to Jim King,  
c/o National Consultation Team.  
PO Box 2060  
Watford WD18 8ZW

That is probably more effective than signing a petition, but you can do that too, at the post office; and some local residents will also be collecting signatures.

## SAVE WELL COURT!

Edinburgh World Heritage Trust could give a **grant of 79%** for the complete renovation which is long overdue. Since it would be a major project, the work and the grant would be spread over three financial years — but mostly in 2005, if **the proprietors press ahead** with the preliminary stages, including a legal agreement between themselves.

**A letter from Colin Lumsdaine,** a former resident, who tried to get Well Court renovated in the 1980s:

*Over the last twenty years I have watched the steady decline of this unique building by simple neglect. My visits to Well Court over the years have saddened me when I think of what could have been, had the original proposals with grant aid been taken up. I sincerely hope that you will be successful where others, including me, have failed to convince the proprietors of the short, long and continuing benefits of getting this latest scheme going. As a chartered surveyor I see the decline becoming rapid as the ravages of faulty roofs, pipes, tiles and stone provide the ideal conditions for the onset of devastating dry rot and other problems. The potential increase in capital values, rents and saleability after refurbishment are obvious to me.*

*I appeal to the present proprietors not to let this opportunity slip by and, as the temporary custodians of this lovely historical building, give all the support they can to reverse the decline now.*

He was the elder son of Aleksander Żyw, 'a Polish émigré artist of recognised ability and significant status', and his wife Leslie Goddard, a lady 'of formidable charm and strength'. It was for them that the red-tiled house by the old bridge in the Village was renovated by Basil Spence in 1946-48.

Adam spent his childhood and much of his later life there. He was Chairman of our Association from 1980 to 1983 and the author of 'The Dean Village 1980'. In 1999 he and his wife Helen moved to the beautiful house and garden of Old Mayen on Deveronside, saying that they would not have left Bell's Brae House except for something even better; but it was in Banff that Adam died suddenly on 18 July this year, in a house to which they had only recently moved.

The phrases quoted above are from the obituary by Adam's friend Isi Metzstein in *The Independent* of August 13th. He referred to Adam's *impossible quest to become a latterday "Renaissance Man"*. *This very public ambition manifested itself unashamedly in simultaneous and successive involvements in areas of creativity which, from early on, included architecture, landscape architecture, sculpture, drawing and poetry, not to mention a host of minor interests such as furniture design and making, cooking and nature. . . .*

*After completing his education at Edinburgh Academy, Żyw enrolled in 1969 into the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London, . . . a*

*centre of radical thought and activity. Following the award of his diploma in 1974, he attended Edinburgh University's post-graduate two-year course in Landscape Architecture. From there he took a further slight sideways step, accepting the post of investigator for the Royal Fine Art Commission for Scotland. On the completion of the three-year contract in 1981, Żyw established a one-man architectural practice. . . . There is relatively little physical evidence of this seemingly half-hearted return to mainline architectural practice, coinciding as it did with involvement in restaurants, some part-time teaching of architecture and design in Glasgow and Edinburgh and lots and lots of timber sculptures, from the unwieldably large to the covetably small. . . .*

*The decade from 1978 involved [numerous] shows in sculpture, drawings and furniture. . . . Nothing was outside his field of view; once he even won a public competition to design a litter bin for the Scottish Postal Board — installed outside the board's Edinburgh offices, this enormous disembodied thistle instantly became a marker in the city, a public sculpture disguised as street furniture. [Where is it now?]*

*The permanent resettlement of his parents and his brother Michael (an olive grower and painter) in Tuscany did not stop Żyw doing his art with one eye on his fierce and demanding father,*

## ON THE RIVER

### Swans

*the other on his brother and a third eye on Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo. The pressure of undoubted excessive talent and the perceived paternal expectations more or less made him abandon serious architecture and keep on extending — almost certainly over-extending — in wider and wider and wider artistic domains. . .*

*His social and intellectual agility overcame many self-created obstacles and he was loved and appreciated by his numerous friends and family. If anything over-generous to others as well as himself, he gave of his time both creatively and wastefully.*

Another obituary was contributed to *The Scotsman*. (15.8.03).

*. . . For him man could never improve upon the beauty found in the form, grain and curl of wood. . .*

*In 2002 he won the Ottakar/Faber literary prize for his poetry. . .*

*Adam will be remembered by many as a man of considerable charm, social grace and generosity.*

He is survived by his mother, his brother Michael, his wife Helen and three sons from his earlier marriages, to Marigold Watt and Jenny Brown.

. . . . .

**Dippers:** *Each pair occupies a stretch of river up to 2km long. Boundaries are defined in early November by a melodious warbling song . . .*

*The nest . . . is built on rocks, in crevices . . . or even behind waterfalls.*  
Dr Stuart Glen, *Scottish Wildlife* No 50.

In late June a pair with four cygnets were seen under the footbridge in the Village. Graham Priestley, of the Water of Leith Conservation Trust, says that they were almost certainly from a nest at Murrayfield, where the Stank burn comes in. (Only one of the two other nests, both at Bonnington, produced any young.)

The cygnets were too young to fly, but must have come over the weir above the Village. They were reported to be 'trapped' between our two high weirs, but it was downstream of the the lower one, at the Dean Bridge, that they were attacked by a rottweiler.\* The male was killed and, it is thought, two of the cygnets. The female and the other two got away, but have not been seen since.

\* *E E News* 15.7.03

### More kingfishers?

The number of sightings has gone up year after year, but it is not clear whether there are more kingfishers or simply more reports. The only nest known to the Water of Leith Conservation Trust was robbed, probably by a mink.

### Otters?

There have also been reports of otters. Some of the animals may have been the smaller mink, which is commoner, but other reports were convincing enough to suggest that the river has regular visits from otters.

## SALMON?

In June it was reported in Edinburgh newspapers that 'The Forth Fisheries Foundation' want two weirs, at Dean Village and at Redbraes (Bonnington) to be modified, so that salmon can come up the river to spawn.

\*Dr Graham Priestley, of the Water of Leith Conservation Trust, has replied, in 'A Memorandum for interested Parties', that the suggestion shows a lack of familiarity with the river: the Redbraes weir **can** be passed by salmon; there are **two** impassible weirs at Dean Village, and nine more weirs before the headwaters of the river are reached, not counting the dam at Harperrig reservoir.

Although the lock at Leith Docks is a major barrier, dead adult salmon have very occasionally been found. One bore a tag showing that it had come from a spawning in the River Wear; the others too were probably strays.

In 1996 electro-fishing of the pool below Redbraes weir found a few sea trout but no salmon. In 2001 neither sea trout nor salmon were found at Stockbridge, but a salmon parr was found just downstream. In 2002 four salmon parr were found at Bonnington and three salmon/trout hybrid parr at Stockbridge, clear evidence that salmon had spawned in the river.

But none of this justifies the creation of fish passes, which are expensive and not always effective.

**This is a trout river!**

\* See September 29 on back page.

## THE CHARACTER APPRAISAL of a Conservation Area

defines the key elements that contribute to its special historic and architectural character. It is a guide for planning decisions and for possible enhancement. Applications for significant new developments should demonstrate how the essential character of the area, as identified in the document, has been taken into account.

### The Dean Conservation Area

comprises not only the Village and Sunbury, but also the villa areas to the west, the Art Galleries, St George's School, Stewart Melville College and Dean Cemetery. The appraisal covers its history and development, views, topography, townscape, architecture, activities, open space and nature.

**The opportunities for enhancement** which are listed include

- The introduction of art works.
- More seats by the river  
and in the Village.
- Repairs to boundary walls.
- Upgrading and unifying  
railings etc. by the river.
- Improvements to the area around the hotel to improve the setting of the mill house and the granary.

The document will be finalised only after consultation with the public and organisations including the Dean Village Association.

There will be

**A LOCAL EXHIBITION  
for a week in November.**

**Look out for posters!**

## IAN F CUNNINGHAM

Late of Bentley Motors, London  
& Rolls Royce Aero Services Dept.  
Belford Mews

*Dean Village Association News* No 3  
(November 1971)

It was in 1934 that Ian Fraser Cunningham rented a former smithy in Belford Mews, but '13.7.36', pencilled on the wall above the stove, records the date when he bought the premises. During the War his friend Jimmy Blair kept the garage going, while Ian serviced aircraft all over Scotland.

In 1947 he returned to Belford Mews, where he was joined in 1952 by his son, also Ian, who worked alongside his father ('a hard taskmaster') until the latter retired in 1971. 'Even after this, young Ian never quite knew when he was going to get an inspection', perhaps until 1986, when the older Ian died.

During the 1970s and 1980s the garage maintained the Queen's cars. 'Young Ian' closed it in 2001, but still lives in Belford Mews. We wish him a long and happy retirement.

Source: *Review of Bentley Drivers Club*  
Nos 227 & 228 (2003)

## MIDDLETON AND TOWNSEND

Motor Engineers, Lancia Agents, Petrol,  
Repairs etc. at 56 Belford Road.

*Dean Village Association News* No 15  
(November 1972 )

## LOCAL HISTORY

Would you like to investigate some aspect of it? For example, you might look at the details of the 1901 census. (Who lived here? What were their occupations? How many in each flat?) Professional guidance is available from the Scottish Local History Forum, which publishes a journal, *Scottish Local History*. (I could lend a copy. D.L.F.) The D V A is a member of the Forum, which amateur as well as professional historians can join for £14 a year.

Address: Doris Williamson (SLHF)  
c/o Scottish History,  
17 Buccleuch Place EH8 9LN  
Website: <http://www.slhf.gcal.ac.uk>

## FOXES OR SEAGULLS?

Which is it that tears open black bags which have been put out before the morning of collection, scattering the contents along the street? Whichever it is — it does seem to be a nocturnal creature — the lesson is the same:

**Put your rubbish out  
on Tuesdays and Fridays only  
not the night before!**

## RECYCLE AT SAINSBURY'S

books and clothes for OXFAM; paper (not envelopes), glass, tins and plastic bottles without their tops, washed and crushed.

## DEAN VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

**Monday 29th September at 7.30:**

**Dr Graham Priestley:**  
**SALMON**  
*in the Water of Leith*  
at 23 Lynedoch Place.

**Friday 10th October at 7.30 for 8pm**  
**DINNER**

**at the French Institute**  
Book on the form enclosed.  
with this newsletter.

**For a week in November:**

(Place and dates to be announced.)

### **EXHIBITION**

about the Character Appraisal  
for Dean Conservation Area.

(See page 6)

**In December (date to be announced):**

### **CAROLS**

**at the Christmas Tree**  
**in the playground.**

**Secretary:** Alison McLaughlin  
13 Well Court, Edinburgh EH4 3BE  
(Telephone 226 2172)

**Editor of *Dean Village News*:**  
Dorothy Forrester (226 5843)  
13 Belford Road EH4 3BL

**Saturday 27th September:**

### **DOORS OPEN DAY**

**St Bernard's Well**, from 1000 to 1700.  
If you can help man it for two hours,  
tell Alison McLaughlin, 13 Well Court.  
(Telephone 226 2172).

**3 Belford Road**, from 1000 to 1700.  
(Edinburgh Society of Musicians)  
Music and refreshments.

**Drumsheugh Baths**, 5 Belford Road,  
from 1200 to 1600 only. Refreshments.

**25 Learmonth Terrace**, from 1000 to  
1500 only. 'The most sumptuous interior  
in Edinburgh.' (The RAAF)

**5 Charlotte Square**, from 1000 to 1700  
(Edinburgh World Heritage Trust)

**You can get the complete list**

on [www.cockburnassociation.org.uk](http://www.cockburnassociation.org.uk)

or in a public library,

or by sending an A5 s. a. e.

to The Cockburn Association

55 High Street Edinburgh EH1 1SR

### **CAR BOOT SALE**

**on Saturday 4th October:**

from 11am to 4 pm

**in Belgrave Crscent Gardens**

to raise money for the gardens.

There will be room for keyholders' cars  
only, but you can go and browse or buy  
and visit one of best of the New Town  
gardens. We have asked for the gate  
beside West Mill to be open.

**For a key to the gardens (£140 p.a.),**  
apply to Mrs Anne Lanzl (332 5032)  
8 Belgrave Cres. EH4 3AQ