

Dean Village News

Issue 160 Winter 2011
www.deanvillage.org

Plans for the Playground

The Chairman and Secretary of the Dean Village Association met Councillor Lesley Hinds to discuss the development of the old playground following the consultation with residents that took place in the summer.

Of the 900 households within the Dean Village Conservation Area only 63 replies were received. None of those that replied wanted the area to remain as it is. Most wanted the area properly landscaped with additional shrubs, more seating, and provision of information boards describing the historic sites within Dean Village and the natural history of the Water of Leith.

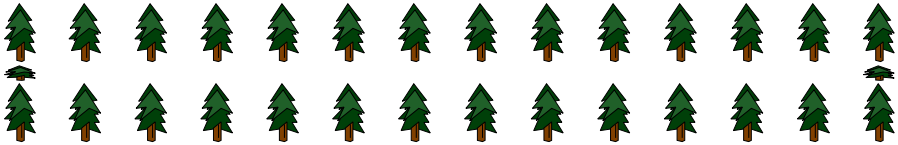
A plan was devised that met all these criteria. In addition it was decided to provide a small play area for young children. This would comprise a painted area which replicated the course of the Water of Leith between Belford Bridge and Dean Bridge. Accompanying this would be two small rockers in the form of herons, swans or geese. In this way the area would reinforce the relationship with the Water of Leith and be educational for the youngsters.

A rough design was submitted to the Parks Planning Office for approval. We are now awaiting a draft design which will be

considered by the Dean Village Association Committee. The committee will then decide if any adjustments need to be made and will also require an estimate of the cost involved. Only then will we be able to assess the viability of the plan and decide on ways to raise the necessary funds.

Grants are available. The Council could provide a grant providing the developed area is an amenity for children. Also the North Inverleith Neighbourhood Partnership has a small discretionary fund to give grants to appropriate projects within the area. There is also an industrial award available for community projects.

Dean Village residents will be informed when the next stage of plan development has been concluded. This will probably be at the Annual General Meeting in April 2012.



Dean Village Christmas Tree

The consultation also asked residents whether they wished to have a Christmas tree placed in the playground and decorated with lights, or whether they would accept lights decorating the existing tree. Forty-two voted for decorating the existing tree, ten wanted the Council to provide a tree, and eleven had no preference

Consequently the Council was asked to decorate the existing tree. The Inverleith Neighbourhood Partnership was approached and they gave a grant of £1500 to provide the lights. These will stay in place throughout the year and be illuminated at appropriate times. Hopefully this will be done in time for Christmas this year.

So we will have done our bit by saving the Council money for providing a tree each year, and also there will be one less tree cut down.

KIDNAPPED!

In the last issue of the Dean Village News reference was made to the artist Sam Bough, now resident in Dean Cemetery, and his friendship with Robert Louis Stevenson. They spent some time together on the Dubh Artach lighthouse off the Isle of Iona, where Sam painted and RLS wrote "Kidnapped".

This monument to Stevenson and his book may be found on the Corstorphine Road, just down from Ellersley Road on the left-hand side going into Edinburgh. Standing proud on top of the stone are the figures of David Balfour and Alan Breck Stewart. In the story this is the furthest point that they travelled together and where they parted after their perilous journey following their meeting after David's shipwreck off the Isle of Erraid.

On the side of the monument is a relief head and shoulders of Stevenson. The monument was sculpted by Sir Alexander Stoddart, funded by the Scottish and Newcastle Brewery and was



Breck and Balfour



Robert Louis Stevenson

unveiled by Sir Sean Connery in 2008.

RLS posted a somewhat idealistic description of life in Dean Village from the perspective of those crossing the Water of Leith on Dean Bridge in his “Edinburgh: Picturesque Notes”. “Every afternoon carriages containing ladies with card cases spin to and fro about the duties of Society and yet down below you can still see with the mills and the foaming weir the little rural village of Dean where the dusty miller comes to his door looks at the gurgling water, hearkens to the turning wheel, and the birds singing, perhaps whistling an air of his own to add to the symphony, for all the world as if Edinburgh were still the old village on the castle hill, and Dean still were the quietest of hamlets.”

Thomas Telford designed Dean Bridge at the behest of John Learmonth, then Lord Provost of Edinburgh. Construction was completed in 1932. Today Telford’s magnificent bridge carries much heavier traffic, travellers probably equally unaware of the now relatively tranquil and residential Dean Village.

Dean Village News

This issue of the Dean Village News has been delivered to members of the Association in the Dean Village Conservation area. If you have enjoyed reading this issue, or found it useful or helpful in any way, you can help by recommending that friends or neighbours join the Dean Village Association and help us look after our village. Yearly membership is £5 (or £8 per couple) or opt for life membership at £35 (£50 per couple).

Dean Village Association Website

We must apologise that our website has been down for some time. Please continue to keep checking on **www.deanvillage.org**, where we will have details of the history of the village, dates of our walks and other activities.

previously.....Scotland's History Festival

Festival Director Susan Morrison was inspired to come up with the idea of the Festival when she discovered that people knew more about Henry VIII than Mary, Queen of Scots. So she decided to create an event that would bring the dramatic history of Scotland into the public domain. From 14th to 30th November there were multitudinous events, including debates, discussions such as the Robert Louis Stevenson evening, demonstrations of past skills and walks.

The Dean Village Association participated in this event by staging two walks. On the afternoon of Sunday 20th November Caroline Gerard and David Perry conducted an afternoon walk through the village. 28 people participated on a beautiful sunny day. David Perry and Evelyn Whitfield led a cemetery walk on the following Sunday morning, thankfully a clear day, if rather cold. 24 people joined us on that walk. The events were a great success and we hope this will become a regular feature.

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Dean Village Matters

Resurfacing of Dean Path

In September one of our residents made an enquiry to our local councillors as to the possibility of resurfacing Dean Path, which is in a dreadful state of repair. He referred to the fact that forty-three other local roads in Edinburgh had been resurfaced this year.

The councillors passed this request on to Road Services (Services for the Community). The reply our resident received agreed that this number of local roads had indeed been resurfaced - but the term "local" applied only to roads within housing schemes or cul-de-sacs and were therefore lightly used. The resurfacing consisted only of repair and a thin overlay

This treatment would not be suitable for Dean Path which carries significant traffic and lies on a hill. The resurfacing would require substantial asphalt inlay and also sett reconstruction in the appropriate areas.

Each department has to work with limited resources and therefore there is a necessity to prioritise all work that needs to be done. The prioritisation score for Dean Path is such that it will not be included in the draft three-year programme. However the condition of the road is continually monitored and the programme can and does change. Meanwhile the road will be patched until such time that it can be included in a capital programme.

Handrail for Convening Court

In 2007 a request was made to install a handrail on the steps leading down from Dean Path to Convening Court. A job number was issued, but no further progress was made. However, in response to a further request a representative of the Council came and examined the site in the spring of this year. The steps are bounded by a wall on the roadside, but by flats on the other side. At the bottom of the steps a slope leads down towards Damside, but there are flats on either side. In addition there is a

large unsightly pipe on the right hand side going down.

A handrail cannot be attached to the walls of the flats as they are private property. But a handrail would be possible on the wall on the road side of the steps. The Council representative would recommend that a handrail be installed by the time winter came.

Sadly, this has not come to pass. Clarence has been informed!

St Bernard's Well

For several years the committee of Dean Village Association has been given permission by the Museum Section of Edinburgh Council to open the Well to the public. The Well was opened on the first Sundays of April, May, June and July, three Sundays of the Edinburgh Festival and Doors Open Sunday at the end of September. The most frequent comment - "I have been walking past the Well for many years but before now had never seen inside it."

However we may not be able to open the Well this coming year because it has been put on a list for future care and attention. There are small trees growing out of the guttering around the cupola, some of the tessera are coming loose on the interior, and there is a water leak dripping into the porch area. Also the statue of Hygeia has suffered some damage, and there is evidence of past attempts at graffiti.

We should be grateful that some money is available for the upkeep of this gem of a monument, and we look forward to returning to the occasional opening in future years.

Visit the Dean Village Website at
www.deanvillage.org
for the history and activities within
Dean Village

The Water of Leith

What a splendid river is the Water of Leith. To live near it is to experience all its moods. Although it is best if you are at least 12 feet above the bed of the river.

Most of the time it is a quietly flowing river. A good guide to the flow is given by the otter under the Dean Bridge. Normally it sits proudly on a rock, which parts the water to flow around it. Even after a bout of rain, the water only just covers the otter's head.

But on the evening of Thursday August 11th, following prolonged and heavy rainfall, we saw a very different river. The speed and ferocity of the water flow was indeed something to behold. The water thundered over the upper Dean weir, spreading out to include the metal steps. At the metal foot-bridge the water was up to the first fencing on the downpath from Damside and spread along the footpath almost to the stone steps. At Stockbridge the water flowed almost up to the Ghormley Man's shoulders. The flood protection works below Stockbridge were inundated. The designers should have got a good idea as to how the defences are likely to work.

However even that flow was outdone by the floods of 2001, which prompted the installation of flood defences. These flows do not happen very often but when they do their effect is devastating.

However these flows do not last for ever. The rain stops, the river levels go down. The swans, ducks and herons resume their lives on the river. And once again we forget about the river and just accept that it is there - the Water of Leith flowing down to the Firth of Forth - Edinburgh's river.

More Dean Village Matters

The Wooden Hoarding on Belford Road:- This hoarding between Drumsheugh Baths and the Society of Musicians building has been an eyesore for some time. Towards the end of May an entire section was broken down, revealing unguarded stone steps which led down into the abyss. The Caledonian Trust, which owns this site, was asked to replace the hoarding with a more suitable and safe alternative. All they did was re-erect the broken section.

Energy Monitoring Study:- Historic Scotland and Napier University are looking for three-bedroom flats to carry out monitoring studies using smart meters. These measure energy consumption and would help householders to improve their energy use and thus reduce bills. The meters are installed free and monitored over two-years. To find out more contact ChiaraRonchini@ewht.org.uk or phone Chiara on 0131 220 7734.

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My Friends in the Cemetery XII by David Perry

Mary Syme Boyd 1910 – 1997

Strictly speaking Mary Syme Boyd is not a resident of Dean Cemetery but a memorial to her exists there. Mary was a resident of Dean Village and a well-known and prestigious sculptor. She lived at 14 Belford Mews, a house bought for her by her uncle, for over sixty years. Passers by may care to examine the letterbox which she adorned with the legend “Mary Boyd Sculptor”.

Mary Boyd was born in Edinburgh on 15th August 1910, the daughter of Lt-Col. Francis Darby Boyd who was Professor of Clinical Medicine at the University of Edinburgh between 1919 and 1922. Mary studied at the Edinburgh College of Art between 1929 and 1933, one of her tutors being Alexander Carrick. Subsequently she was awarded a scholarship to travel throughout Europe where she saw the rise of the Nazis, much to her disapproval.

On her return she settled down in her Belford Mews house, and used the former stables as her studio.

She preferred to sculpt animal studies and her constant companions were a succession of labrador dogs. One of her labradors is thought to be the model for a relief carving in Dean Cemetery on the gravestone of Tom Ranken, Lawyer (a large and loveable personality). The dog is surrounded by an arc of musical notes which are part of “Ode to Joy” by Beethoven, used as a setting to Psalm 98.



Other examples of her work include two angels and a baptismal font, all for St. Mary’s Episcopal Church, Corstorphine, but now in St. Mary’s Episcopal Cathedral. The font was a memorial to her friend Dr.

Dorothea Walpole.

Following her death on 30th November 1997 some small sculptures, books and tools were bequeathed to the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art. She requested that her ashes be scattered at Rannochside. A memorial to her was placed in Dean Cemetery on the gravestone of her sister Lesbia Laurence Meron Boyd, who predeceased Mary in 1993. This stone lies next to that of their father, referred to as a “Good Comrade” and their infant brother and mother.

A sculpture by Mary Boyd recently came up at an auction by Lyon and Turnbull on 16th November. The piece was listed as a sandstone sculpture of a cat, initialled MSB, and raised on a fitted ebony plinth, 62 centimetres in total height. The sculpture was accompanied by a patinated plaster maquette of the same subject with the incised initials MSB and signed on the underside. The suggested price for bids was £375. The actual successful bid was £1300. And there was I thinking of putting in a bid! This is proof that the works of Mary Syme Boyd are sought after. So keep your eyes open for any of her works on sale. And if you already own a work of hers - lucky you!

Much of the material for this article was taken from “The Artists and Sculptors of Dean Village” by Caroline Gerard, published 2009, available from Committee members at £6 per copy.

Scottish Food Guide

Award-winning Scottish Food Guide and its associated initiatives Scottish Cheese Trail and Scottish Farm Shops, make the positive connection between Scotland's finest producers, suppliers, and best places to eat and stay in one highly effective website, providing a showcase for all seekers and providers of good food. All recommendations are independently researched and listed solely on merit.

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An Unwelcome Guest

My wife and I were intrigued one morning to find two long silvery trails leading from the patio doors, across the carpet to under an occasional table in front of the settee. Close inspection revealed no sign of the perpetrator. The silvery trail was dry and immediately disintegrated on touch. We hoovered around and next day there was no repeat. But the following day, once again, two silvery trails crossed the carpet to the table.

The cause of this phenomenon could only be a slug or snail. But a month passed and from time to time this trail appeared, only during the night. We moved furniture, inspected the undersides, looked up the walls and even the ceilings but no suspect was traced. Finally we set an alarm clock for 4 a.m. and on the second night the culprit was found. A thin four-inch long slug was making its way towards the patio doors. I rolled it onto some paper where it shrank to a short fat slug. I put it outside, where eventually it happily slithered away. Well, I didn't actually see it smile.

The slug must have got in one day when we had the patio doors open. What was remarkable was firstly the slug's survival, and secondly its cunning. It never emerged during the day, only at the dead of night and never while we were in the living room. And it must have secreted itself during the dormant times by stretching out and wedging itself down between the edge of the fitted carpet and the patio doorframe. The only sustenance must have been the tiny particles of food we dropped onto the carpet while eating at our table. There seemed to be no source of liquid available. Yet it managed to keep itself alive for a month with the minimum of resources.

The editor would be interested to hear from anyone with a similar experience, or who has knowledge of the behaviour of this species. In fact any contributions at all about any subject, local history, animal behaviour or interesting holidays would be gratefully accepted and may be printed in the Village News.

Buses, Trams and Automobiles

So the tram system is going ahead, but only from the airport as far as Picardy Place, past St. Andrew's Square. Sadly the cost has escalated, partly due to disputes with the contractors, partly due to the complexity of pipes and cables under the streets. Delays and disruptions have occurred, such as happened during the laying of the rails in Princes Street. All this has resulted in a reduction of the original plan to connect the airport with the Ocean Terminal.

Edinburgh is a great city, because the centre is relatively small. A reasonably fit person, once in the centre, can walk between most likely venues. There is an excellent bus system for those less able or in a hurry. If all else fails there is a plentiful supply of taxis. However a car in the centre is a real pain. They add to the congestion and cause pollution. In addition parking places are at a premium and very expensive.

The key consideration is how to get people to and from Edinburgh city centre. The tramline may be considered to be the backbone of the transport system with other means of transport delivering people to the stops. The tramline has these advantages: -

- a large number of passengers can be transported on each journey
- a faster speed of delivery of passengers between the outskirts and the city centre
- would encourage lesser use of cars
- reduces traffic pollution
- running costs are relatively low in the long term

The disadvantages are: -

- The installation costs have become expensive
- The system consists of only one line

Your editor recently visited Manchester, primarily to go to the

City Art Gallery and the Lowry Gallery in Salford. There is a tramline connecting these two venues, part of an extensive tram system in that city. The trams ran frequently, every twelve minutes during the day, were well patronised and ran quickly between each stop because they did not have to encounter traffic congestion. The tram system is an accepted and well-run feature of the city.

How would the tramline affect those who live in Dean Village? Probably very little. Residents who live in the village centre know all too well that they have to be fit for purpose. An ascent up Bell's Brae, or up the steps by the flats or Hawthornbank Lane to Belford Road and you are in the city centre. Or take a ten-minute walk to Stockbridge to reach the town centre by bus. The nearest tram stop is either Shandwick Place or Haymarket. The most likely journey is to the airport, and most would get someone to drive them or take a taxi.

We can only hope that the tramline is a success when it is up and running.

Dorothy Forrester - Change of Residence

Dorothy - founder member of the Dean Village Association and Secretary for many years — has now moved to Murrayfield House. Dorothy would very much appreciate a visit from her friends in Dean Village and elsewhere. Please avoid the meal times which are between 12.00 and 1.30 and 5.00 - 6.30. It is advisable to contact the unit before visiting at 0131 337 1263

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Nature Notes by Barbara Mackay

A bleak summer on the whole, warm with overcast skies. These cloudy, heavy skies appear to have affected the wild life and the plants. The Water of Leith has alternated between grey, turbulent and stormy and the placid stream we all enjoy. The mallards do not like these changes, the turbulence forcing them to move their ducklings to safer stretches. No hunting mink have been spotted but the heron is often seen gracefully stalking from stone to stone and then the quick darting jab in the water as supper is caught. Chaffinches have gone, as have the crows. Bullfinches are still visiting the feeders along with blue and coal tits.

Bird song has quieted after a busy summer of nesting and breeding. No dippers have been sighted on our stretch perhaps because of the turbulence; although these fine little birds are equipped to swim underneath the surface. Perhaps the frequent spates proved too hazardous.

The reed bed in Inverleith Park is a good spot for bird watching but patience is necessary. As usual Nature has something up her sleeve and this autumn the late spectacular bursts of colour has been the surprise. Flowers are still in bloom and photographs show that whilst the trees were bare and sombre around the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday in 1952, this year they were in fine leafy form and colour.

What do we hope for this winter? I note from my diary that last year “snow fell stealthily and heavily” during the night of 26th November!

A Happy Christmas and New Year to all of you.

Dean Village Association

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Dean Village News

The deadline for articles for the next edition of
the News is

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If you would like to submit an article for the News
please e-mail the Editor at davper@aol.com

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