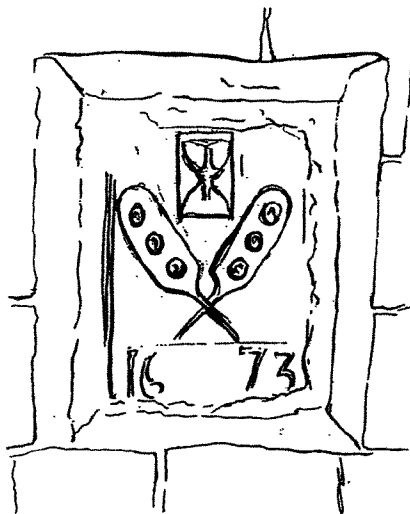


DEAN VILLAGE NEWS

No 139 Summer 2004



THE 'CHARACTER APPRAISAL' for DEAN CONSERVATION AREA

When we discussed the draft document in DVN 138, we emphasised what had been left out of the section on enhancement. After comments from the DVA and others, some additions have been made in the 'finalised' version, of which we have obtained a copy. (It had not yet gone to the Committee.)

The maintenance of the weirs is an important factor in maintaining the character of the conservation area.

But will the Council accept the responsibility for maintaining them?

The 'potential themes for enhancement' now include *improvements to street furniture, including street lighting and pavements.*

Only 'potential'? Must we wait another 20 years for decent street lights?

And what about those grotty old concrete litter bins? (We too are in the World Heritage Site!)

As for the walls that need pointing and the railings which need repainting, they are mostly the Council's responsibility. From the Cockburn Association we received the comment that 'issues over street lighting, litter bins, the re-pointing of walls and the maintenance of railings are matters generic to all of the Conservation Areas . . . and should be dealt with by the City Council as matter of course.'

But they are not being dealt with!

We had suspected that those matters were omitted from earlier drafts because they would cost the Council money.

Is the prospect better now? Maybe not: *There are no financial implications following from the approval of the Appraisal. Proposals for enhancement will be considered during the allocation of the existing enhancement grant budget.* 'will be considered' Is that all?

LISTED BUILDINGS in need of renovation

The proprietors of two of them have applied to Edinburgh World Heritage Trust for grants. (See *DVN* 138)

The application from **Well Court** has not yet been 'approved in principle' by the new board of the Trust, but work on **Baxters' Tolbooth** (at the foot of Bell's Brae) is likely to start this summer.

At **Drumsheugh Baths** Historic Scotland will contribute to the cost of the major work which has become necessary. The swimming pool and the area surrounding it will be completely replaced, with due regard to the original design and materials.

BEAUTIFUL PICTURES

Well Court is featured on the jacket of *The Most Beautiful Villages of Scotland* by Hugh Palmer (Thames & Hudson, £24.95.)

Pity about the text!

Redbrick mill-houses can be seen from Dean Bridge.

The mills (plural) have been *converted into airy loft spaces to house a new generation of Edinburgh's merchant classes*. (Do the residents of West Mill recognise their flats or themselves?)

Former tenement courts now form attractive paved spaces. (The photograph shows the patched concrete yard in Well Court, which may be attractively paved in the future, if the current application for a grant is successful.)

THE CATHEDRAL MISSION

It was at the foot of Bell's Brae, in the building erected in 1675 for the Baxters (i.e. bakers) of Edinburgh. It was briefly part of a paper mill which extended up to Belford Road and which suffered a severe fire in 1878. (See *DVN* 124.)

After the fire, 'The Mission to the Water of Leith' was set up by *the late Alfred Griffiths, formerly precentor of St Mary's Cathedral, who adapted [the building] for the purpose of a Church, Hall and Caretaker's flat . . . The newly created church supported a well-trained surpliced choir, a thriving Sunday School and Youth Club and a large number of communicants. . . The Mission is most beautifully appointed inside. The Sanctuary is a model of good Scots ecclesiastical design, and an inspiration to a congregation reared in the wholesome traditions of the Scottish Liturgy; and behind the altar, itself a fine though slightly unorthodox affair with Celtic motives, is a reredos painted by Mrs [Phœbe] Traquair, most famous perhaps for her frescoes in [the Cathedral's Song-School]. The Mission also boasts one or two doucely conceived stained glass windows and a brand new set of vestments.*

Hubert Fenwick in *Edinburgh Diocesan Gazette*. (date?)

In the 1970s the building was converted to flats, one of which has the ornate ceiling of the chapel. The reredos is in a chapel at Plumpton, near Penrith. (*DVN* 126.) What became of the altar and the stained glass?

BETTY BOYD (1934 — 2004)

She died unexpectedly in France. After a private woodland burial, hundreds gathered in St Mark's Unitarian Church for a humanist celebration of her life, during which we heard the following words:

Courage and vivaciousness. . . boundless energy and vitality . . . a warm and nurturing mother . . . welcoming and talented. . . beautiful . . .

She was born in Aberdeenshire where both her parents were GPs, but her mother died when Betty was only five. In 1943 she was sent as a boarder to Albyn School for Girls, which had been evacuated to Aberdeenshire. (Was it there that she lost her broad Doric accent? — 'Fa dae Ah pit ma sheen?').

On leaving school, she came to Edinburgh and trained in Institutional Management, then worked in the Royal Bank training college in Ramsay Lodge. In 1957 she married Bill Boyd, who pursued his career as a psychiatrist while for some years Betty was at home, in Edinburgh or Haddington, bringing up their four children.

Once they were grown, Betty's love of a challenge led her to run a shop in the Canongate ('Country Taste: Foods and Crafts with a Scottish Flavour'). After the Boyds moved to the house on Dean Bridge in 1983, she opened an antique shop in the former cab office, where 'some of her customers would call in just to share some sunshine with Betty.'

Although she was looking after the garden as well as the shop and the house, she still found time to act as Treasurer of the DVA from 1986-9.

When Bill retired, the Boyds moved to a flat without a garden in Belford Road, but Betty adopted an area at the top of Hawthornbank Lane and flower beds at St Columba's Hospice.

However the Boyds were now freer to spend time in France, in a house which they rescued from decay and neglect. Once that was done, Betty did not simply sit back: for several years she organised painting courses there, cooking for up to 15 participants.

She is missed by many.

That clematis just below Belford Road, which Betty pruned so severely, is growing well. (Cf. *DVN* 138)

THE 'LANDFORM'

The landscape feature in front of the Gallery of Modern Art has won for it the Gulbenkian Prize of £100,000 for the museum of the year. The designer, Charles Jencks, was 'inspired by chaos theory and weather systems.'

(*The Scotsman* May 12)

PROBLEM: The crescent-shaped pools were attracting as many as 30 or 40 seagulls at a time. 'The noise used to be unbelievable and children were getting in the poo.'

SOLUTION: Weekly visits of a Harris hawk, provided by Hawkman Services. It does not even have to be released from the perch to which it is attached.

FLOOD PREVENTION

The Council's Flood Assessment Report documents the measures already taken by the Council and their proposals for the reduction of flooding. It can be seen at local libraries and on the Council's website at www.gov.uk (Click on 'environment').

In *DVN 131* we described the scheme for the Water of Leith. During the consultation process there were 49 objections, of which 37 remain unresolved; so there will be a public inquiry, probably in October. (There will be a 'pre-enquiry hearing' in July.)

It was originally hoped that work would begin in October 2003 and be completed in September 2005, but construction is now unlikely to start before spring 2006, if consent is given.

However, detailed design is continuing and much has already been done to reduce the risk of flooding: obstructions have been removed and the river bed has been dredged in places.

The estimated cost has risen to £33.4 million, for consultation led to further modelling and changes in the initial proposals, and it became clear that sewer capacity would have to be increased.

'HERITAGE > FUTURES'

This is a new organisation based at Glasgow Caledonian University. Part of its purpose is to act as a 'hub' for local history activities. If you would like to investigate the history of our area, contact Dorothy Forrester (226 5843).

POLLUTED!

An article in *Scottish Local History* (58) is based on the minute books of Colinton Local Authority, 1882—1890.

In 1885, *concerning pollution of the Water of Leith, unless immediate action were taken by manufacturers and local authorities, an action of declarator and interdict would be raised . . . by the Town Clerk of Edinburgh.*

The pollution and stench were said to be caused by effluent from the mills. . .

In 1887 *the Corporations of Edinburgh and Leith required from CLA a statement of steps to prevent and remove pollution from the river. . .*

The CLA was anxious to improve the river but the matter was beyond its control. The principal cause, it claimed, was chemical pollution from the manufacture of paper, which was not strictly speaking injurious to public health. It was accepted that there was also sewage from houses, but this was trifling in amount compared to the volume of the stream: there were few water closets, the soil from houses being generally used in garden cultivation . . .

N. Semple: 'It's All in the Minutes'

An Act of Parliament of 1889 resulted in a sewer from Balerno to the sea. One had already been laid from Roseburn to the sea, following an Act of Parliament of 1864. They are still in use, but no longer discharge directly into the Firth of Forth, being intercepted by a modern sewer which leads to the treatment plant at Seafield.

'AN ALIEN FISH'

In *The Scotsman* of 22 March it was stated that bullheads from the south of England have 'infested' the Water of Leith. It is '*a fierce predator, 18 cm long, which eats fry, eggs and small insects and competes for food and territory with other fish . . . They are much tougher than salmon and trout and can thrive in lower grade water.*'

The Water of Leith Conservation Trust does not seem to be worried, and we are told that the presence of bullheads shows that the water is clean.

BOULDERS

The rounded boulders in the river and in some walls are of igneous rock, probably dolerite. Having no laminations, it has been attacked equally in every direction by weathering, so that rough blocks have become rounded.

Most of the rock in this area is sandstone or shale, which have been intruded by dolerite dykes. These are probably the source of the boulders, but some may have been transported further by a glacier which dumped them here at the end of the last ice age, some 12,000 years ago.

THE PIGEONS

which used to nest in the retaining wall above Belford Road have had to find another 'cliff', since devices have been added to the weep-holes to keep them out. Well Court and Belford Court should be all the cleaner.

NATURE NOTES

(Mostly from an article by Charles Melville in the Spring Newsletter of Douglas Crescent Gardens Association.) Birds seen or heard frequently over the last six months have included wood-pigeon, magpie, carrion crow, blackbird, song-thrush, robin, chaffinch, dunnock, wren, bluetit, great-tit and coal-tit. Greenfinches, bull-finches, a long-tailed tit, a tree-creeper, and a sparrow-hawk were also reported. Sparrow-hawks may be nesting again on the Cathedral. Unusual sightings included flocks of redwings, skeins of wild geese, 30-40 linnets pecking at twigs and branches and, for the first time, a great spotted woodpecker.

On the river there were mallard, dipper, grey wagtail, moorhen, kingfisher, herons and, more rarely, goosanders and a cormorant.

P.S. Mr Melville has seen a heron gobbling up a mallard chick.

STORING REFUSE IN STREETS

The Council has begun to site 'Communal Waste Bins', on a trial basis, in several places within the World Heritage Site. There are none in our area, although it is in the EWH Site, along with the Old and New Towns.

The Cockburn Association has expressed concern, arguing that this is a method of storing refuse rather than for collecting it. Moreover, the Council must examine ways of separating waste at source, for recycling, so as to reduce the amount dumped in landfill sites.

EMIGRATION

According to the 1901 census, William Nixon and his wife Sarah (née Campbell) lived at 37 Dean Path* with their four children, including William, who was then two years old.

We have heard from this William's grandson in Canada. He writes that his grandfather was honourably discharged from the Royal Scots in 1919. Then 'in the early 1920s, hearing that his grandmother and seven aunts and uncles had emigrated to Walkerville, Ontario, he did likewise, the only Nixon from Edinburgh to do so.' (So those other emigrants must have been on his mother's side.)

In 1901 William Nixon senior was a coal carter, but our correspondent writes that he also worked 'at the Steam Baths in Dean Village.' At the Drumsheugh Club there used to be Turkish Baths, as you can still read on the metal grille in Belford Road.

*The old no 37, demolished c. 1939.)

OUR VILLAGE PUMP

Dear Sir,

I was surprised to find recently that the village pump has been removed from the west side of Well Court. As the base has been neatly finished off with cement, it looks as if this has been done by some official department of the Corporation. Can anyone explain why this has been done?

R.M.

Dean Village Association News No 1,
September 1971.

FASHIONLESS!

Sir,

Progress on the transformation of the West Mill into flats is good. But what has happened to the natural slates which covered the roofs until they were taken off by the contractor in preparation for the renewal of the roof timbers? They have been replaced by fashionless sheets of some black material which has none of the character, colour, texture or scale of the former slating.

Architectural work of this kind which is partly reconstruction and partly restoration needs very special handling and a sympathetic feeling for a nice balance between the old and the new. . . .

I am not opposed to modern buildings in the Village but I will always resist workmanship which falls short of the highest standards. Only the best is good enough for the Dean Village.

Signed 'S M' (Stuart Matthew)

D V Association News, February 1973.

(In 2004 even duller slates have been used to re-roof 14 Belford Mews.)

UNDISCIPLINED!

In 1938 the Dean Village Association's application for use of the church hall for a children's treat was refused, in view of the possible damage to the new floor and the fact that the children were not connected with any organisation which could be counted on to preserve discipline.

History of Dean Parish Church (1986)

AT BELL'S MILLS

Planning consent was refused for the building of 24 flats just upstream from the Menzies Hotel, for the reasons given in *DVN* 137. Since the developers have appealed, there will be a public enquiry in September.

AT DEAN PARISH CHURCH

Our Association contributed to the centenary fund for this church, which replaced in 1903 the earlier one which dated from the 1830s. At the east end there are now two stained-glass windows, illustrating Alpha & Omega, and a glass screen with a delicate pattern suggesting flowing water — symbolic of the history of the congregation and of their faith. Both the windows and the screen were designed by Douglas Hogg.

AT ST BERNARD'S WELL

La Tocquenaye and Pichot were both horrified by the statue of Hygeia at St Bernard's Well. . . — not the statue we see to-day, which dates only from 1888, but its predecessor. Instead of the romantic, elegant nymph one might expect, . . . it is a podgy dame, coarsely sculptured, whose function seems to be to warn visitors against drinking the waters, lest they too swell up like that. Better to stick to good wine!

Professor Alan J. Steele:

Some French Impressions of Scotland
(The Franco-Scottish Society, 1996.)

DVA review 2004

With *DVN* 138 we sent a form which invited you to comment on the DVA's — **strengths** (What do we do well?) — **opportunities** (What might we do?) — **weaknesses** (How can we improve?) and the **threats** we must guard against. Alison McLaughlin thanks all who responded, but would welcome more comments or suggestions.

Write to her at 13 Well Court
or complete the form on-line at
www.deanvillage.org

Here are some of the comments she has received: We should

— take action to get traffic to slow down in Belford Road.

— encourage more residents to join the DVA. [We try! Once a year *DVNews* is delivered to every address, with an invitation to join.]

— focus on the living neighbourhood, rather than the Village as a tourist attraction.

AGM of DVA

It took place on 27th April at 5 Charlotte Square, thanks to the generosity of the Edinburgh World Heritage Trust. We are pleased to welcome two new members to the Committee, of whom a list is given on the back page.

The accounts for 2003 showed that our funds had increased by £900 to £7201.

The well-attended meeting included an talk from David McDonald, the new Director of the Cockburn Association.

DIARY

The Clean-up took place in April, not on May 23, as previously announced.

Tuesday June 15 at 7.15

(Not on 22nd as previously announced)

Walking Tour of the Village.

Meet at the house on Dean Bridge.

Adults £2.

Children free.

Sunday June 27 at 2.30

Guided Walk in Dean Cemetery.

Meet at the gate in Dean Path.

Adults £2

Children free.

Sunday July 18

Dean Village Barbecue

For details, see posters

or visit www.deanvillage.org

Sunday August 1st at 2.30

Guided Walk in Dean Cemetery

as on June 27.

Tuesday August 17 at 7.15:

Walking Tour of the Village

as on June 15.

Saturday September 25:

'Doors Open Day'

St Bernard's Well will be open

from 10 a.m. till 5 p.m.

DEAN VILLAGE ASSOCIATION

2004 — 2005

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