The Story of a Home from Home

In the year 1900 the house which is now No 4 Old Church Lane was purchased by the Rev Archibald Charteris, acting as Trustee, in order to create a home for children of Church of Scotland missionaries serving overseas. Although necessarily supported by subscribed funds, this was very much a personal project of Dr Charteris and his wife. Mrs Charteris wrote of “providing a real true home for our missionaries’ children - as like as possible in warmth of love and piety to those natural homes of which their parents... have had to deprive them...” The house was denominated The Home House, (“home” in the sense of not being “abroad”).

Between 1900 and 1913 much building work took place. Several bedrooms were added, the old coach-house was turned into a school-room, the stables into a laundry, a dairy was built on the cool north side (this to process milk from their very own cow), and, finally, a sick-room with its own bathroom was provided.

The first superintendents were sisters, Miss Maggie Paterson, who was in charge of the cooking, and the younger Miss Minnie, who was in charge of everything else. These ladies were called Auntie by the children, and seem to have been much loved. Miss Maggie died at Home House in 1919, aged 62, and her sister carried on alone until retiring in 1937, aged 70.

Twelve was considered the ideal number of children for the house and they ranged in age from "under three” to 18. Taking brothers and sisters together was very much part of the original aim, and all the children were sent to school at George Watson's College or the Royal High School.

In 1948 the increasing difficulty of maintaining a full complement of children and the mounting costs which could not be met from the fees forced an amalgamation with another similar home, and Home House was put on the market.

The house was then purchased by The Livingston Hall Home for Friendless Girls as a hostel. The "girls" by 1950 were all quite elderly, and the hostel seems, in effect, to have been a retirement home. It was later transferred to the Scottish Female Domestic Servants' Association, and in 1962 to Edinburgh and Leith Old People's Welfare Council. This organisation did considerable work on the property, putting in extra bathrooms, more communal kitchen facilities, and forming a self contained flat for a housekeeper at the east end of the house.

By 1991 the house had become too expensive to maintain to modern standards for only seven or eight residents, and the Welfare Council put it on the market. Thus the following spring the house reverted to ordinary family use for the first time in 92 years.

Susan J Mercer

For The Paddock

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Architect Team to Address AGM
Keith Horner is a Landscape Architect. He will lead the design development for The Paddock project. He has been involved in a wide range of landscape-related work in over 20 years in private practice, and his creative approach has been recognised by a series of award-winning projects. Keith is being assisted by Bob Heath, an Architect and Stone Consultant, who has extensive experience of the repair and conservation of historic buildings and of working in historic contexts. Both Keith and Bob know Duddingston well, being involved in the preparation of the original ‘Duddingston Village - A Plan for Action’ report. Consequently, they are fully aware of the unique character of the village and of the elements which, in combination, contribute to its quality and identity.

They tell us that “Historical sensibility to the site and its setting will underpin our design approach, although, as designers, we are intrigued by the possibilities that The Paddock presents regarding the juxtaposition of new contemporary insertions with the historic fabric of the village. However, the site’s physical characteristics, particularly of significant changes in level, necessitate a pragmatic and practically based response to access provision between the various areas of the site, and we are enthusiastic about how such functional requirements may generate an aesthetic for the project which allows these separate spaces to be connected into a coherent whole. Equally, the role of The Byre is crucial in forming a flexible space for a range of activities for both local and other groups, as well as acting as the hub for annual events within the community. Our aim is to create a scheme which is flexible enough to meet the diverse demands of the local community and which results in a distinctive new feature for the village that will become a focus of village activity and local pride”.

Keith and Bob will be at the AGM this Thursday 22nd May to explain their preliminary planning ideas and to answer questions. To help this exchange of ideas plans will be on display in the Scout Hut from 7.40 pm.

Roger Crofts to take the Role of Project Director
We are extremely fortunate as residents of Duddingston Village to have special access to some land in the village. We have to thank Miss McNiven who left us a generous bequest and especially the Johnston-Marshall family for agreeing to an off-market sale. The land is owned by NTS, which manages the bequest, but it is for the benefit of the village community now and for future generations.

Many of you have contributed your thoughts and ideas for the use of this land. All of this valuable input has been drawn together by Horner and Maclellan and a draft plan will be described to everyone who attends the AGM.

I have the privilege of taking on the role of delivering the plan on your behalf and have been given the grandiose title of Project Director by the Executive Committee. I hope that everyone in the village community feels that our land is of benefit to all interests and ages. I also hope that you will continue to contribute your views and ideas, and some of your time as volunteers, to making the land a centrepiece for us all. Do feel free to contact me. Roger Crofts 6 Old Church Lane Tel: 661 7858 E-mail: roger@dodin.idps.co.uk

I recently attended, along with many, many people, Erin’s funeral. It was a friendly, caring, inclusive celebration of a life that had ricocheted across the world, inspiring and challenging friends and professionals alike. I did not know Erin, I met her through her illness. I did not know her family - I met them also though her illness. Erin’s coffin was made of recycled paper, it looked like a star child’s pod, delicately and beautifully painted the night before the funeral both inside and out by her family. It was framed by two banners - one in saffron silk for her spirit and the other in black brocade for the sorrow her death had brought to her family, friends and colleagues. And I think I remember red velvet - a symbol for the fire that would light her way as she journeyed towards the setting sun.

I sat and listened to the story of her life told with love and laughter, with tears and with song. I learnt that Erin hated Scrabble, that she loved vibrant colours and that she could entertain an entire room by swinging a long string of beads round her neck like a hula hoop. I learnt that she was a brilliant academic who had devoted her working life to improving the reproductive health and rights of women and that she achieved this through a brilliant career in international health and development programming, policy, and research. I witnessed the love of her family and friends as they shared their loss with us and spoke of the memories of Erin that they would cherish forever.

In sharing Erin’s illness and death with us her family and friends have given us all a great gift - a sense of connection with her. It may be a particular moment, a sentence, a look, a colour an object. Whatever it is we hold, it is imbued with vitality, with power and with grace. In some small way we have all shared in her life and death and now mourn her passing. We are connected and strengthened by the experience and for this we send our thanks to Erin - who made a difference.

Freda O’Byrne

Notices

Deaths: Rhoda Begg 14th April 1906 - 9 January 2002 Ms Begg lived in a self contained flat at the west end of Home House when it was run by Edinburgh and Leith Old People’s Welfare Society. She left to live in Pitsligo house, Morningside and later The Elms in Whitehouse Loan when Home House was put on the market in 1991. Her affection for Duddingston village was such that in her will she left a legacy of £500 to the Conservation Society. Jackie Fraser died 20th February 2003. Jackie leaves his wife Annie, who he married in Duddingston Kirk in 1955 before moving into Abercorn Cottages, The Causeway, where they lived ever since. Erin Talbot McNeill. Born in St John’s Newfoundland on 17th June 1966, died on 31st January 2003. Erin was married to Carn Gibson and is the mother of Zoe and Ninian. She lived in Jane Cottage in The Causeway. Births: James and Juliet Leslie, of 15 Old Church Lane, are delighted to announce the birth of George Matthew (6lbs 15 ozs) and Joseph James (7lbs) on the 29th December, 2002. Older brother Patrick is also delighted with his new baby brothers. They would like to thank all friends and neighbours for the beautiful cards and gifts and for their wonderful support. Ramona and Ron Kirkness, of 18 The Causeway, are delighted to announce the birth of Gabriel Emma, at 6.00 am on Friday, 4th April, 2003. Mother, daughter and father all doing well Moved In: Welcome to Jeff and Susie Geer of 52, The Causeway.

Small Ads: Wanted. Retired person for grass cutting and general garden maintenance. Tel James or Juliet 661 3757

Events:

Summer Sports Day on the Old Tennis Court Sunday June 22nd 3pm to 5.00pm A fun family afternoon of egg and spoon and three legged races! All ages welcome! Details 0131 661 5415 or email fobinjeff@yahoo.com

Sheeps Held Quiz Nights
Quiz nights are held each Thursday evening in the downstairs bar from 9pm. Come as a team or go solo! Rumour has it that the taxi drivers are the team to beat!
A letter from Dr Jack
On Saturday 19th April we celebrated Easter weekend at Duddingston in a way that has never been done before in Duddingston - at least not in living memory! A cast of around 80 actors (some professional, the others gathered from various Christian denominations throughout the city) gathered at the Manse garden and performed a Passion Play. Starting with Last Supper the play led over 500 spectators through the Manse garden to the Church Hall and then on to the Carseway. Along the route various scenes took place. Up past the Sheep Heid and on to the front of the Church where we saw the two crucifixions of those crucified the same day as Jesus. It was the back into the Manse garden for the crucifixion of Christ and very moving scene from Mary Magdalene. Many of the audience were moved to tears whilst other reflected on what was truly a spectacle to remember. Squeezing 500 people along the narrow streets of the village was indeed reliving a biblical scene from old Jerusalem. For most who witnessed the Passion Play we saw a religious play that touched our humanity. I would like to thank all in the village for their co-operation on the day and for the help from Holy Rood School who provided their car park.

May I wish you on behalf of the Congregation a belated happy Easter and invite you to come along to the Kirk any Sunday at 10 am or 11:30 am. You may be interested to know that we have invited an American Youth Choir to lead our worship at the 10 am service on Sunday 15th June. YOU are welcome.

Rvd Dr Jim Jack

In Dr Neil's Garden
Well my friends, looking back across the months and forwards to our M.S Open day (24 25 May), it's been quite THE spring. Almost no rain and temperatures that would have made us feel fortunate in August! First; the Snowdrops and Chionodoxa were a blessing after the winter, closely followed by a spectacular show of Fritillaria meleagris and black Hellebores. The Narcissus were glorious as always - Nancy and Andrew's planting being so generous and bold. They always seem to me, to really announce that spring is HERE. Has any one noticed how the Primula veris have multiplied? Such a generous gift (a whole wheelbarrow load) from Colin McLean (Scottish Wildlife Trust, Bawsinch). They seem to have really settled. The Rhododendrons and azaleas are coming into their own now and, indeed, Rhododendron praecox and Magnolia stellata are both done and dusted. Just now the things to see are the Lewisias, Bluebells, Violets, Smilacoea racemosa and then all the scented treasures; Lily of the Valley, Daphne retusa - which on a sunny day has the most bewitching scent - and the last and most generously scented of the Narcissus, Narcissus poeticus. The red Japanese azaleas are in full bloom now and I think are quite audacious with the bluebells coming through them.

Much work is also afoot.............

As some of you may have noticed, a new pool has been dug in the meadow and is waiting for its liner (31st May). On the same date the National Trust Conservation Volunteers will also be digging the foundations for a dry stone dyke that will form a curved retaining wall and seat - perfect for a summer evening in the meadow. What would we do without them? Many plans - slow progress.

The most important thing however - is to express how deeply grateful I am to all of you who have supported, and continue to support, me with your kindness, generosity and patience - both in spirit and time. Then of course a huge thank you to my friend Lynn Blackburn who made time in her very busy work schedule to look after the garden two days a week, while I was away. An invaluable gift of love and support. Thank you all and see you in the garden soon.

Claudia.

More Events:

Sheeps Heid Bistro Restaurant
The new restaurant is now open upstairs on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 6 to 9.30. Drop in for a meal or book on 656 6951. Parties welcome and special menus available. Lunches served every day in the downstairs bar as usual.

Bawsinch in Summer - Open Day
Sunday July 6th 11 am to 5pm
Come along to visit the hide, walk the reserve guided by a member of the Scottish Wildlife Trust, see the heronry, watch the wildfowl. An excellent family day out! Bring your binoculars! Enter by the wicket gate on Duddingston Road West, 200 yards south of Old Church Lane junction.

Company Chordelia at the Brunton Theatre 7.30pm Saturday 31st May
Company Chordelia present a double bill of dance and physical theatre. "a touring programme which highlights the contrasting yet complimentary skills of classical ballet, contemporary dance, trapeze and aerial acrobatics" The Guardian. Booking: Brunton Theatre, Musselburgh - (loads of free parking space and a bus stop outside the door) Box office 665 2240. Meet in the bar after the show.