

# The Paddock

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## A Gracious Place to Live

**Duddingston** has always been hospitable; over six centuries ago the Sheep Heid Inn served local husbandmen with ale and sheep's head broth. Sheep were kept in Holyrood Park, slaughtered on its lower slopes and delivered to Edinburgh neighbourhoods. The villagers bought the heads of the decapitated beasts and the land lady of the Sheep Heid made an excellent broth, which became, over the centuries, famous all over Edinburgh.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, Robert Ferguson urges

"ye who for health, for exercise, for air,

Off saunter from Edina's smoke-capt spires,

And by the grassy hill or dimpled brook

An appetite revive, should oft-times stray

O'er Arthur's Seat's green pastures, to the town

For Sheep-heids or bone-bridges famed of yore,

That in our country's annal stands yclept

Fair Duddingstonia, where you may be blest

With ample fare and vegetable sweets,

Freed from the clamour of the busy world."

Paths sometimes became very miry, and the 'well-pykit' sheep skulls, after the broth was made, were used as stepping stones, 'bone-bridges'.

In former times it was said that King James VI, son of Mary Queen of Scots, would sometimes leave his Palace of Holyrood home to take refreshment under 'the humble though hospitable' roof of the Sheep Heid. Indeed, in return for hospitality received, he presented the inn with a gold-mounted ram's head which long stood in a place of honour.

In 1796, the minister of Duddingston Kirk writes of "the many opulent citizens" resorting to the inn during the summer months, "to solace themselves on one of the ancient homely dishes of Scotland, sheep heid broth, for which the place had long been celebrated.

At that time, the Sheep Heid was not the only tavern in Duddingston. There were six or seven others, including the Lochside tavern at the Park gates and two inns at the east end of the village, both of which lay claim to have lodged Prince Charlie on the eve of the battle of Prestonpans. Between the two Kirk Sunday services, incomers to the village took sustenance at the local inns. No wonder, then, that the Kirk session had to rebuke many from the congregation for "drunkenness, blasphemy, swearing, fighting and vaguering through the fields" rather than coming to the second service. For such offences, the punishments were the repentance stool or the jogs. This last, an iron collar attached by a chain to the wall outside the graveyard, can still be seen.



The refurbished wall at No 12 The Causeway gets the final touch from John Evans, stonemason (right) with Sebastian Godlewski and Stephen Donahue

