



# The Newsletter

THE GRANGE ASSOCIATION WINTER 2012 | ISSUE NO.102

# Phoenix rising

Cover story: **Born again – the house that survived a winter inferno**

[www.grangeassociation.org](http://www.grangeassociation.org)

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Welcome to the 2012 Winter edition of **The Newsletter of the Grange Association** in which you will find a questionnaire insert asking for your views on the Association and its work. Please take time to detach it and fill it in as your feedback will help to inform the way we work. You will also find a membership form and our charter. As well as keeping a watching brief on planning, conservation, environment and all matters of concern to residents, the Grange Association organises events, talks and excursions throughout the year, some of which are noted on these pages. Join us and play your part in sustaining the Grange's character and vibrancy.

**Richard Mowe, Editor, The Newsletter**

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Golden Age...

**Tony Reeves** lines up a series of talks on diverse topics for the rest of the winter and ahead

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Cover image by:  
William McDowall

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## Limited edition publications for sale

A limited number of copies of our past publications are offered for sale with proceeds going to Association funds.

**Maps of the Grange in Edinburgh** (£8) is a compilation of copies of some 20 historical maps of the area, showing its development from 1590 to 1931.

**Trees in the Grange** (£5) is an illustrated guide to the rich variety of trees in the area and how to care for them, written by the late Alistair Scott, who worked for the Forestry Commission and lived in Dalrymple Crescent.

**100 Desirable Trees** (£3), also written by Alistair Scott, lists and describes a selection of trees suitable for planting in the area.

**Contact** John Graham or Sue Tritton (as above) who will arrange delivery.

# Leading lights

By TONY REEVES

## EVENTS AND TALKS

18 January 2012

### Edinburgh's Golden Age

Eric Melvin will give a talk on the "movers and shakers" of the 18th Century in Edinburgh, a period that produced such luminaries as David Hume, Adam Smith, James Hutton, Joseph Black, Walter Scott, James Boswell and Lord (Judge) Monboddo. The talk will highlight Eric Melvin's choice from among these notable personalities.

22 February 2012

### The Work of Edinburgh Direct Aid

Edinburgh Direct Aid is a charity set up in 1992 in response to the crisis in Bosnia at that time. Its purpose is to help those who have suffered as a result of war or natural disasters. Dr Denis Rutovitz, long-term Chair of the Organising Committee, will give a talk on the work of the charity to illustrate how aid gets to those for whom it is meant, and how Scotland reaches out a personal hand of friendship to those it helps.

Edinburgh Direct Aid volunteers have worked all over the world, and the charity has received funding from the Scottish Government and the European Union.



Two of the leading lights of Edinburgh's Golden Age: David Hume (above) and Sir Walter Scott



14 March 2012

### Grange Association AGM

The meeting will include a short talk on *The Stonework of the Grange* by Richard Groom

Our meetings are held in the Butterflies Cafe at Marchmont St Giles Church. Evenings start with a short networking period at 7.15pm in time for the main talk at 7.30pm. You are welcome to stay for coffee, tea and biscuits at the end of the talk.



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# HOUSE PROUD

It has been rechristened (at least by the builders) Phoenix Cottage – and with apt reason. Number 33 Dick Place literally has risen from the ashes and its determined owners are about to take up residence more than two years after buying the property. In the third of our series HOUSE PROUD Richard Mowe traces their persistence and commitment in the face of misfortune and adversity.

## At last the Phoenix takes flight...

A year ago Val Buckley and Paul Barlow were looking forward to becoming residents of 33 Dick Place, which they had sensitively and imaginatively restored from a neglected abode, in desperate need of care and attention, into an extremely des res.

After four months of planning and eight months of building work the end was in sight. They were close to realising their planned vision of the light and airy eco-friendly accommodation, extending backwards into the walled rear garden with two extra bedrooms and a bathroom in well-insulated loft space, a kitchen and dining area running from front to back, a study floating on a mezzanine level and a double height living space. There was a spacious hallway and open staircase with a new cupola; under-floor heating; solar water heating panels on the roof; and paved outdoor areas easily accessible from three sets of French windows to the rear and side of the stone-clad and slated building.

Besides the eager anticipation of adding the finishing touches and the sadness of leaving behind their flat in Findhorn Place they felt very relieved as the protracted process neared completion. Previously they had only a modicum of experience of renovation. "Certainly we had never attempted anything as extensive as this," says Val whose role as project manager had stretched her organisational skills.

Only a few days into 2011 those dreams and feelings of elation were dashed when fire struck the unoccupied building, destroying everything apart from three of the original external walls.

It was 1am on 3rd January when the insistent ringing of the telephone roused the owners. "We got a message to call Lothian and Borders Police. It was with a terrible sense of anticipation that we dialled the number" recalled Paul, a University of Edinburgh Professor. "They told us 33 Dick Place was on fire. They said that it sounded pretty bad, and could we attend at the property straight away. Even then we thought that all might not be lost. But when we walked out of the front door into the chilly night air, we could smell the fire despite the house being nearly a mile away".

On arrival they found Dick Place cordoned off at the junction with Lauder Road. Dick Place was chock-a-block with fire appliances.

The fire brigade were concerned lest the flames leapfrog along the neighbouring properties and neighbours had been woken and told to ready themselves for potential evacuation. "We spent an hour giving statements to the Incident Commander and the police. They were relieved to hear that there should be nobody in the house. Only then were we escorted through the mayhem to a position across the road from the fire. We stood and watched for a while. The flames were still leaping high into the Winter sky despite the deluge of water from multiple fire hoses. Several man-years of work destroyed in hours."

The flames were so fierce that at one point neighbours on Mansionhouse Road were roused by the light and thought their own house might be on fire. Once William McDowall appreciated the situation he had the presence of mind to capture the conflagration on camera.

Eventually the owners headed back to Findhorn Place. A restorative couple of drams preceded a close and urgent perusal of the insurance documents, to double check they had appropriate cover.

"The fact that we were well insured was a huge relief," said Val. "We had our own self-build insurance which meant there was nobody in the middle that we had to deal with. A lot of people go into ventures like this without having full coverage whereas we had confirmation from our insurers more or less straight away that our claim appeared valid".

Returning at 10.00 am they found the last fire appliance about to leave and the investigation underway. In the cold light of day the reality of the task ahead hit them but there was no question of anything other than a plan to start all over again. "It was an awful time because the property became a target for vandals who started stealing copper and other items. So the building was being stripped almost on a daily basis. We had been warned this might happen but it was difficult to make it totally secure. Even as late as December (2011) we had rocks lobbed through our new windows at the front so we upped the security yet again with cameras, extra fencing and boarding. And our neighbours offered to be extra vigilant".



*Almost there: the rear of 33 Dick Place displays a remarkable transformation from wreck to meticulous rebuilding*



*Summer house and cemetery at the end of the garden*



*The cold light of day: scene of devastation last year*

The great architectural historian John Gifford and his collaborators wrote in their guide to the buildings of Edinburgh, that Dick Place is a street of “polite villas” but the wreckage of Number 33 seemed for months to resemble more a rude blot on the townscape.

Eventually, the insurers and loss adjusters agreed the claim, and a demolition company started the work of clearing countless skip-loads of debris. The original architects and contractors then came back on the job. “We stuck to the original and approved plans with only a few minor alterations. I could tell during discussions that the insurance representatives felt that it would be cheaper to pull the whole place down and start from scratch but we stood firm. We had bought a traditional house with historical character – and that is what we wanted to have,” said Val.

While the rebuilding work languished as details were being finalised and agreements forged, the owners were eager to see some progress and so started work on the garden, the paved areas and the stonework for flowerbeds, a pond, and a summer-house (christened Val’s Folly by the builders at the same time as Phoenix Cottage emerged as the appropriate new name for the house).

The couple pay unreserved tribute to their architects and main contractors who were almost as upset at the devastation as they were themselves. “Our builders came round immediately and

helped us to absorb the shock of it all. They said: ‘We can build it again and make it better than it was first time.’ Even though we might have felt it, they insisted it wasn’t the end of the world. Yet January is a depressing month in any circumstances. With a burned out shell of a house on our hands it was certainly not the most auspicious start to any year.”

The couple may not wish to tempt fate, but 2012 certainly owes them a positive reward with a new home in “Phoenix Cottage”.

## FACT FILE

### **Erdal Architects**

12g Timber Bush, Edinburgh EH6 6QH

Tel: 0131 454 3330 <http://www.erdal.co.uk>

### **Walker Joiners and Builders**

Tel: 01506 442714 / 0131 333 5228

## PLANNING WATCH

# The paving dilemma

By Graham C Bell

In the past months there have been two applications to pave over front gardens to provide parking space involving loss of substantial areas of garden ground and the demolition of front walls to make drive-in entrances. The City Council's policy is to oppose the paving over of front gardens where the paving will exceed two-thirds of the total area.

The Association has endeavoured to oppose such applications where the loss of garden would result in less than 50 per cent being left as garden ground. One such application was refused following representations and one granted.

As reported in the last Newsletter many residents have expressed concern at the proposed erection of a mobile phone mast on the Carlton Cricket Ground in Grange Loan, although no application had been submitted. The Association's chair John Graham has had a discussion with representatives of the club and has been told that discussions have been terminated with the telecommunications company concerned.

An application to add a two-storey addition to a unique B-listed 1840 villa in Mansionhouse Road has been opposed as it will seriously distract from the original house. The Association has objected to the



Prime site: the former Woodcroft Telephone Exchange on Pitsligo Road is due for demolition. The Association applauds the layout and landscaping proposals but has noted concerns over the "bland" nature of the flats and townhouses

revised proposal, as it will mean the loss of an attractive Victorian conservatory, which provides a clear visual break between the villa and its neighbour.

A matter of concern arising from the Mansionhouse Road development, in particular, is that it appears the Council do not intimate to objectors when significantly amended plans are lodged.

What originally was a proposal to erect a garage with a first floor study above now is reduced to a single storey study, which nevertheless will seriously detract from the architectural merit of the original. The Association commented on the scheme now under way on the corner of Whitehouse Loan and Newbattle Terrace, arguing that the block of flats at the rear was too massive.

It also commented on new proposals for the site of the former Woodcroft Telephone Exchange on Pitsligo Road supporting the demolition of the listed exchange building, commending the layout and landscaping proposals but expressing disappointment at the bland and boxy design of the flats and townhouses.

The property comprises the former exchange and offices, which were decommissioned and vacated in January 2006. The site extends to approximately 1.98 hectares (4.9 acres) and the main building itself extends to approximately 100,000 sq ft over ground and four upper floors. There are two additional buildings connected to the main exchange in the north-east corner of the site.

Each week the City Council issues an update on applications for planning consent and a summary of decisions made. And each week the Association examines the new applications with a view to determining if any infringe the Association's policy.

## NEW APPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING CONSENT

**9C Palmerston Road:** Demolition of conservatory

**\*35 Fountainhall Road:** Formation of car parking in front garden

**18 Grange Crescent:** Demolition of existing house & erection of new house

**18 Seton Place:** Construct patio to rear

**22 Findhorn Place:** Demolish existing & erect larger sunroom

**\*31 Mansionhouse Road:** Replace greenhouse with one & a half storey garage & study

**\*31 Mansionhouse Road:** B listed consent

**28 Mansionhouse Road:** Replace single glazed window glass with slimlite super thin double glazed windows

**7A Palmerston Road:** Erection of conservatory

**\*38A Dick Place:** Demolish existing rear extension and construct new extension

**1 South Oswald Road:** Demolition of timber garage and erection of new garden room

**90 Findhorn Place:** New dormer windows

**17/19 Palmerston Place:** Remove external staircase etc.

**52 Grange Road:** Installation of BT Cabinet

**4 Strathearn Road:** Alteration to existing study

**17 Findhorn Place:** Erection of sun room

**9 Hope Terrace:** Extension of sun room

**145 – 157 Grange Loan:** Provision of satellite dish for each of seven dwelling houses

An asterisk (\*) indicates comments made by Grange Association though not all of our comments involve a recommendation for refusal of permission. Note that the category "Withdrawn" usually means that an application is being redrafted to avoid refusal; most are later resubmitted in a revised and somewhat less contentious form. Some properties may appear more than once, possibly indicating repeat applications have been made.

Contact: **Graham C Bell (667 8631) [planning@grangeassociation.com](mailto:planning@grangeassociation.com)**

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## Traffic Slow Down

A 20mph speed limit is scheduled to be introduced in the Spring to all streets in the Grange area except for some bus routes. New signs (and posts) will start to be positioned this month (January).

Council officers have given an assurance that minimal signage (consistent with legal requirements) will be used and that new posts will only be placed when there are no existing posts which can be used for signs.



Watch out for the new speed limit in many streets in the Grange



## Stonework

Residents have commented on the poor condition of the Wyverns (*image left*) and the stonework in Lover's Loan. Historic Scotland has provided a report on the Wyverns, which indicates that they are, in fact, in reasonable condition and do not need any repairs at present. The City Council have given an assurance that the walls on Lover's Loan have been professionally checked and are "considered to be in an adequate condition at present but will continue to be monitored".

## Tops for charity

Thanks to all those who have donated plastic bottle tops. The most useful ones are those with a "2" or "4" (this includes most milk bottle tops) inside the triangle recycling symbol. Not suitable are the tops of washing up liquid, spray cleaners etc or hard plastic tops. If you are in doubt, please include the tops and they'll be sorted later. The tops we collect go to Galashiels Rotary Club who sell them to CK Polymers in Charlesfield who use the melted tops to make the casing round fibre-optic cables. The money raised is going towards the new hospice and palliative care unit at the Borders General Hospital. Please continue to leave bags of tops at 6 Grange Terrace. I can provide further details, if anyone is interested.

SUE TRITTON

# Garden Exchange

In October we put the 'exchange' into Grange Garden Exchange, with a meeting at Alison Bramley's house to swap seeds and plants.

We are hibernating for the winter but will meet again in March for a hands-on pruning event. There is also interest in the topic of *How to Build a Rockery*.

This year we will have a programme of monthly visits or meetings, some to open gardens where the group can arrange special times for visits; and some informally to each other's gardens.



*In full bloom – the promising prospect of Wormistoun House Gardens in Fife ... book your seats now for a coach trip on 22 July*

# Events

**Mid May:** We do not plan to run a Plant Sale in May 2012, but hope to replace it with a visit to the East Lothian nurseryman who has supplied our Plant Sale stock in previous years.

This will be arranged through the Garden Exchange group, so get in touch with Alison Bramley (667 5667) if you would like to go, or if you'd be interested in ordering plants from the nursery.

**Saturday 14 April:** The Scottish Rock Gardens Club (Edinburgh Group) Annual Show will be held at Fairmilehead Parish Church (at junction of Comiston Road and Frogston Road West). Regular visitors will know of the range of specialist nurserymen selling their plants at very reasonable prices. Doors open at 10.30 and the superb show of alpine plants is open from midday. Stay for lunch – the home baking is legendary!

**Sunday 22 July:** We will run a gardens coach trip to Wormistoun House, Crail, in the East Neuk of Fife. More details will be in the next Newsletter, or get in touch with Judith Reeves (667 5570) if you would like to be kept informed.

**ALISON BRAMLEY**

If you want to join us and hear about future activities write to: [gardens@grangeassociation.com](mailto:gardens@grangeassociation.com)  
Our dedicated newsletters are posted under the gardens tab at <http://www.grangeassociation.org/>



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