



DOWN IN THE DELL



October 2005

To many passers by, the treetops lining the wall on the Cameron Toll side of Liberton Road probably think its only bordering a bit of woodland by the banks of the Braidburn. If you happen to be one of those passers by, take a look over the wall the next time you pass! On the other side there is a large complex of buildings, which make up the headquarters of 75th Blackford Scout Group. "Millar Hall" to give its proper name is nestled down in the dell, in its own city centre woodland oasis. Out of sight of the many commuters and local residents we often go unnoticed by the community we are part off.

The 75th Scouts have been serving the community since 1922, when it started up in Mayfield South Church (now Craigmillar Park Church). With the group only breaking for the duration of the 2nd World War, we have built up a long and distinguished service providing the opportunity of learning new skills and good citizenship through the Scouting programme.

To expand our range of activities available to the youth of the area it was determined that the Scout troop should find themselves a more suitable base for tent pitch and fire lighting, and skills training. The old war buildings at Nether Liberton were explored and by 1959 the Troop was meeting in the tin roofed building which we now use as workshops. The Group Scout Leader – Brebner Millar was not entirely satisfied with the troop meeting on a different site from the Cub Scouts who were still at the church hall. So he set about making plans to convert the other building on the site (An old decontamination centre to deal with nuclear fallout) into a purpose built facility to house the whole scout Group. The scheme met with a lot of challenges; finance and support from out with the group being a major hurdle. The group persevered and eventually completed the conversions and building of the new timber hall. On the 3rd of May 1969 the Lord Provost – Sir Herbert Brechin, formally opened the new Scout Group Headquarters.

Millar Hall has proved to be worth every bit of the struggle to build it and has served well as the Headquarters for over 35 years. When not being used for scouting activities we let other groups use the facilities. Currently housing the Dunedin School who will soon be moving to their new home adjacent to the hall in Liberton Bank House, also a youth theatre company, Dance school and a rehearsal venue for the Edinburgh Gang Show. We also have many summer visitors from all across the world who use the hall as their base while visiting Edinburgh and Scotland. It is often wondered why groups of foreign scouts can be seen hiking up Craigmillar Park in to town and back again at the end of the day and where do they go? Well know you know! The local community have also used the hall over the years, with numerous residents' associations using it for their meetings and the Council using it for public meetings. There have been many other groups including martial arts, dancing, poetry and fire eating to name but a few. Indeed the hall is still available for bookings should you be looking for a local venue?

The forward thinking and determination of Brebner Millar has left a lasting legacy for the Scout Group and a fine amenity that the whole community can enjoy and be proud off!

Jonathan Tait
Scout Leader