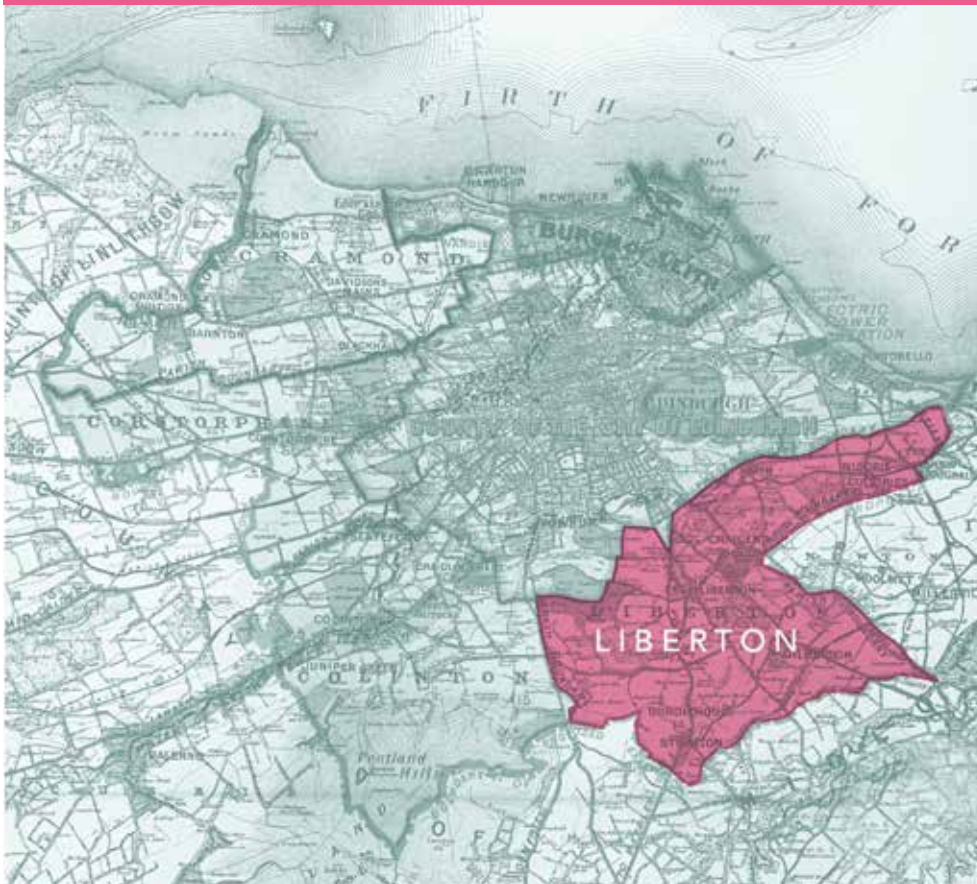




BRIDGEND FARMHOUSE



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NOTABLE PEOPLE



1

Mary, Queen of Scots (1542-1587)

On 19 August 1561 Mary, aged nineteen, arrived at Leith harbour.

Mary had been taken to France as a child to be educated and brought up in the royal household and was returning to Scotland under unforeseen circumstances. Her marriage to the young French king, Frances II, had been cut short when he died suddenly. And as Mary was the Queen of Scotland, she was left with little choice but to leave the French Royal palace for Holyrood where she would continue her reign in person.



Mary was befriended by Sir Simon Preston, the laird of Craigmillar, who proved to be one of her most loyal supporters. Craigmillar Castle was a relatively short distance from the Palace of Holyrood and the extensive surrounding woodlands and parks provided a comfortable and secure place for Mary with her courtiers to meet and be entertained, away from the more formal Holyrood environment.

These were perhaps some of Craigmillar's brightest and happiest times. It may be fanciful, but you can imagine Mary, on a sunny morning, setting out on horseback with her entourage to spend the day hunting - a sport she loved. It may even be possible that from time-to-time she would visit the little chapel and the hunting lodge at nearby Bridgend. In the evenings Mary and her companions would have enjoyed the laird's hospitality in the castle's halls, filled with music and laughter.

Sadly, these happy days were not to last.

2

Margaret Dickson (1702-1768)

This macabre incident took place at an inn near Cameron Toll on Peffermill Road.

In 1728 Margaret Dickson, who originally belonged to the fishing community in Fisherrow near Musselburgh, was hanged in the Edinburgh Grassmarket. She had been found guilty of murdering her new-born child in the town of Kelso where she had gone to work. Although she strongly maintained that the child was stillborn the Judge had not been convinced of this. Margaret's body was given over to her father and other family members which they placed into a roughly made wooden coffin on the back of a cart to be carried back to Musselburgh.

The party set off slowly on foot along the cobbled streets, going through Crosscausway and down past Echobank and the Powburn cottages on to Peffer Mill. There they halted at a roadside inn to rest and refresh themselves.

How long they were there is not known, but a curious passer-by, on hearing a strange scraping noise from inside the coffin, dashed into the inn to alert the party. They rushed out and were horrified to find Margaret sitting bolt upright in her coffin. The lid had not been properly fastened and she was able to prise it open. Miraculously, and much to the everyone's astonishment, she had 'come alive' and was strong enough to climb down from the cart.

The law took the view that, because the sentence of the court had been carried out, she was not to be prosecuted further. Margaret became a celebrity in her own right and was known for the rest of her life as "Half-hangit Maggie". There is a public house named after her in the Grassmarket near the spot where she was hanged.

3

Mary Burton (1819-1909)

Mary Burton moved to Edinburgh from Aberdeen in 1832 with her widowed mother and brother and lived in Liberton Bank House near Cameron Toll until 1898.

Mary was a pioneering educationalist and an advocate for improving access to education for women and working people. She played an important part in the Watt Institute - the forerunner of the Heriot Watt University - subscribing to its finances and becoming its first woman governor. She also took an active part in the Watt's Literary Association and was its Honorary President from 1883 to 1901, contributing to its debates well into her seventies. She had campaigned for the Watt Institute to admit female students on equal terms to men and thanks to her efforts in 1866 the Institute opened its classes to women, some twenty years ahead of other institutions.

Mary was also a leading supporter of the Edinburgh National Society for Women's Suffrage. In 1868 she went to court to plead her case, unsuccessfully as it turned out, for the right to register to vote. She did not live long enough to see the vote but left £100 in her will to the Women's Suffrage Society to campaign "for the admission of women to sit as Members of Parliament either at Westminster or in a Scottish Parliament".

Mary did not confine her interests only to higher and further education and sat on Edinburgh Parish Council and the School Board where she fought for co-education, evening classes for both men and women and, intriguingly, for boys to be taught to sew and knit.

NOTABLE PEOPLE



4

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

(1859-1930)

Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of the detective Sherlock Holmes, spent his early life in Edinburgh and lived for a while at Liberton Bank House.

Arthur's family circumstances were not altogether happy as his father struggled for most of his life with severe ill health. But his mother Mary was well educated and had a passion for books. It was her beneficial influence that proved to be the making of Arthur, inspiring him in the art of storytelling from his earliest years.

In 1864 Arthur and his siblings were temporarily housed with families across Edinburgh. He went to live at Liberton Bank House in the care of Mary Burton who, as it turned out, was a remarkable guardian. It is said that he wrote his first story during his time at Liberton Bank House. Arthur was befriended by Mary Burton's nephew, William, who later became a successful engineer. Arthur was known to have consulted William for advice when writing the Sherlock Holmes story 'The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb' (1892).

Arthur left Newington Academy in 1868 to continue his education in Stonyhurst, Lancashire but returned to Edinburgh again to study medicine from 1876 to 1881. His first published piece was a short story set in South Africa called "The Mystery of Sasassa Valley" which was published anonymously in Chamber's Edinburgh Journal in 1879.

There is a statue of Sherlock Holmes in Picardy Place, close to the house at number eleven where Arthur was born.



5

David Stratton Davis

(1917-2000)



David Stratton Davis was the architect who designed the Inch Housing Estate – 'Edinburgh's Garden City'.

Davis trained as an architect at the Royal West of England Academy School of Architecture in Bristol. During World War II he served with the Royal Engineers in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. After demobilisation he went to work for the family firm, Stratton Davis and Yates, in Edinburgh and Gloucester.

His main work in Scotland was the Inch Housing Estate, which started in 1946. The commission for the work, given out by Edinburgh Corporation, was won in the face of stiff open competition from some sixty eight submitted designs. The site had recently been purchased from the Gilmour family and covered over two hundred acres of attractive ornamental and well-wooded parkland attached to the 17th century Inch House.

Davis' winning design was based on 'Garden Cities' such as Letchworth and Welwyn Garden City and made creative use of the natural contours of the site, preserving the views over Edinburgh towards Arthurs Seat, Blackford Hill and the Pentland Hills.

Houses were to be finished in cream-coloured rendering with roofs of slate, pantiles or copper, similar to the houses Davis would have been familiar with around Cheltenham and Gloucestershire.

Davis went on to advise Edinburgh Corporation on the development of the nearby Glenvarloch site, the next major housing development in the Liberton area.

In 1955, the Saltire Society gave the Inch Housing estate an award recognising it as "the best designed local authority housing in Scotland".

NOTABLE LOCATIONS

1

Edinburgh's BioQuarter

"The future of healthcare is here"
BioQuarter website

In the 1950's the site at Little France just to the south of Craigmillar Castle Hill had been a popular caravan and camping park. People have recorded many fond memories of holidaying there but it was unfortunate that the Niddrie Burn flowing through the site was notoriously bad for flooding, making the headlines in the local newspapers and causing campers from time-to-time to up-sticks and move on.

This was the location chosen for the new Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh which opened in 2003. The site has since flourished and grown and is now known as the 'BioQuarter'. Covering over a hundred and sixty acres and employing around eight thousand people, it is home to the University of Edinburgh Medical School as well as several medical institutes and advanced academic centres. The Department for Clinical Neurosciences transferred there from the Western General Hospital in 2020 and a rebuilt Royal Hospital for Sick Children is planned to open in the near future.

The regeneration of the area included the creation of Little France Park, a new public greenspace next to the BioQuarter. It is said to be 'the biggest new park in a generation' providing new habitats for wildlife and birds with the planting of seven thousand trees and new wildflower meadows. The park also incorporates walking and cycle routes linking housing developments to the east and north with the new Royal Infirmary and BioQuarter.

2

Craigmillar Castle

Considered to be one of the most perfectly preserved medieval castles in Scotland.

Craigmillar Castle stands on a rocky hillside on the southern side of Edinburgh. It was begun with a tower house in the 15th century by the Preston family, lairds of Craigmillar, and was extended over time with added east and west wings, surrounding curtain walls, a chapel, presbyterian church and extensive ornamental gardens.

The Preston family were supporters of the Scottish crown and had a long tradition of receiving royal guests at the castle, notably Mary Queen of Scots. In 1517 the young King James V was sheltered at the castle during an outbreak of the plague in Edinburgh and King James VI stayed there for a short time in 1589 while awaiting news of the arrival of his bride to be, Anne of Denmark.



In 1660 the castle was bought by Sir John Gilmour, President of the Court of Session, and remained the Gilmour family home until around the mid 1700's when the family moved to Inch House. The castle's last inhabitants were said to be two old ladies, daughters of a later Sir John Gilmour and by 1775 it had become a romantic ruin inspiring the poet John Pinkerton to write 'Craigmillar Castle: An Elegy'.

The castle was placed into state care in 1946 and is now looked after by Historic and Environment Scotland.

3

Bridgend Farmhouse

Gateway to Craigmillar Castle Park.

Anyone who has visited Bridgend Farmhouse will know that it is a unique and special place- a sanctuary on the outskirts of the city. The farmhouse has been at the heart of the local community since the late 18th century and up until the year 2000 it was still a working farm.

In 2015 a local community group, 'Bridgend Inspiring Growth', took control and ownership of the land at Bridgend Farmhouse, via the first urban asset transfer in Scotland. Following its renovation by 'Bridgend Inspiring Growth', the farmhouse has been given a new role as a Community Hub – a centre for learning, eating and exercise, supporting a wide range of community focused activities.

Much of the land adjacent to the farm was originally the site of "The Royal Nurseries of Craigmillar" known as Dickson's Nursery, dating back to the late 19th century. The nursery produced a large variety of plants and was famous for its young trees and roses, supplying the likes of the Skibo Castle in Caithness. When the nursery closed down in the early 1960's the land was used by the farmer at Bridgend for growing crops and silage and for grazing cattle.

When farming at Bridgend ceased, the land was put to new use and a large section on the Castle Hill was given over for tree planting and is now part of Craigmillar Castle Park. The City of Edinburgh Council developed a plot, just to the south of the farmhouse, as the site of its new 'Craigmillar Castle Park Cemetery'. Another section, sitting beside the University sports fields, was transformed into organic allotments, Edinburgh's only organic allotments site. The site is run by the Bridgend Allotments Committee, which also includes 'Bridgend Growing Communities', a pioneering community health and gardening project for allotments and the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS



4 The 'Middies'

The site of an ancient forest and marshland.

Until the middle ages, the area to the north of Craigmillar Castle, including the site now occupied by the University of Edinburgh Peffermill Playing Fields, was covered by an ancient woodland known as the forest of Drumselch.

What many users of the University sports facilities might not be aware of is that the playing fields were created on a section of the woodland that had been a notorious marsh – The 'Common Myre', which was eventually drained to be made fit for agricultural use. The fields became known the 'Kings Meadows' and then as the 'Craigmillar Irrigated Meadows'.

In 1884 the Irrigated Meadows were intersected by the new Edinburgh Southern Suburban Railway providing a passenger service through Waverley Station linking Haymarket and Portobello. The line still operates today used mainly by goods trains.

In more recent times the Irrigated Meadows simply became the 'Meadows', known locally as the 'Middies', a rich pasture grazed by cattle from the local farms. When the land was no longer required for agriculture – sometime during the 1990's, the University was able to develop it for their sports activities.



5 The Inch Park

The Park is a much loved public space, created in the 1950's from a former country estate.

Until 1946 the Inch was owned by the Gilmour family when it was sold to Edinburgh Corporation. A large part of the land was used to build the Inch housing estate and the area nearest Inch House was turned into the Inch Public Park. Inch House was used as a Primary School later becoming the Inch Community Centre.

Stretching from Cameron Toll shopping centre to the northern fringe of the Inch housing development the park provides a fantastic range of amenities – mixed woodlands, open grassland, a children's play area, rugby, football and cricket pitches. There is a sports changing pavilion overlooking the playing fields alongside the winding drive skirting the high ground, to Liberton Primary School and a residential home, leading on to the west gate on Gilmerton Road.

The Braid Burn on the north side of the park was notorious for flooding and sections of the park have been designed to act as a flood reservoir intended to reduce the flows downstream. New floodwalls were put in place between Inch House and Old Dalkeith Road but the water course has been preserved in its natural form with many 'environmental features', planted with wetland vegetation, shrubs and a large number of trees, to preserve the natural habitats for local wildlife.

NOTABLE FACTS

1

Pentecox

In the early part of the 19th century Pentecox Cottages, near Little France, was the site of the Edmonstone/ Newton waggonway railhead.

In the 1700's Edinburgh's domestic coal supplies were carried directly from the collieries near Edmonstone and Gilmerton into town by horse and cart and in bags by packhorse. But costs were relatively high and the constant high volume of coal carrying traffic making its way in and out of Edinburgh caused problems on the poorly maintained roads of the time.

Two local businessmen, Alexander Laing of Shawfair, the owner of Newton Colliery near Millerhill in Midlothian, and landowner Sir John Wauchhope of Edmonstone, came up with an idea to transport coal on a waggonway from Millerhill to a place near to the town centre.

The route went from Newton Colliery, round the farm at Shawfair and on to the Wisp before turning west through the Edmonstone Estate to Little France where there was a coal depot at Pentecox. The waggonway was built relatively quickly and was opened for business in 1818. It was an immediate success. But this was not to last and was thought to have ceased working sometime in the 1830's in face of competition from the rival Edinburgh & Dalkeith Railway.

It is possible, however, that the whole length of the waggonway may not have shut down. At least part of it appears to have been in operation for several years afterwards as a map of 1899 shows a coal yard at Little France and a tramway from there to the Edmonston pits to be still in existence.

A visible sign of the waggonway may have survived until recently on a farm track from the cottages at Pentecox leading east towards Niddrie. The track disappeared when the BioQuarter was being constructed.

2

Rats

Tom Speedy in his history of 'Craigmillar and its Environs' gives us an insight into a little known fact about the area in the late 19th century. The presence of large numbers of rats in the area seemed to be a major problem for farmers as they burrowed into the fields causing great damage to their crops. The source of the infestation seems to have been traced to the Irrigated Meadows – now the site of Edinburgh University Peffermill playing fields.



The unsavoury fact was that rats, found in great numbers, were attracted by domestic waste flowing through the sewers from Edinburgh and on to the 'Irrigated Meadows'. Apparently the sewage was deliberately turned on to overflow a part of the Meadows every day with three weeks being needed to irrigate the whole area.

It may well be the case that the descendants of this brood of rats came to inhabit the nearby pig farms. Farmers have told tales of the times when inspecting the pigs in the evenings, as soon as the byre doors to the pens were opened, swarms - "hundreds" - of rats would rush out en masse into the night.

3

A Blast from the Past

On 21st March 1982 a massive explosion lit up the sky in the Bridgend area. The mysterious blast was traced to the nearby Council Craigmillar recycling centre and waste treatment dump. Eyewitnesses testify that debris was deposited over a wide area of farmland stretching almost as far as the Craigmillar housing estate but thankfully no one was injured.

At first it was thought that unknown and unseen people had been responsible for placing dangerous material into the dumpsite but subsequent investigations showed this not to be the case.

It was found that the explosion was caused by the remains of explosives that were buried when the Hammond's Fireworks factory closed down. In 1970, when the site was being cleared, some eight tonnes of explosive materials were left and had to be disposed of. The decision was taken, rather than attempt the potentially dangerous manoeuvre of transporting them through Edinburgh for disposal at sea, to bury the material on site and seal it in a concrete bunker.

The site was later taken over and developed as part of the City Council's waste treatment plant and the buried material forgotten about until that fateful night in March 1982.

NOTABLE FACTS



4 Bridgend Hunting Lodge and Chapel

It is not known exactly when the chapel at Bridgend was built – possibly sometime in the early 16th century. It would have been used by local people and by travellers on their way to and from Edinburgh. The land round about Bridgend at that time was covered in forest and marsh and had long been a favourite royal hunting ground, well stocked with red deer and other animals. A hunting lodge is known to have been built beside the chapel during the reign of King James V.

Evidence of these lost buildings came to light in 2014 when excavations by the Greater Liberton Heritage Project and Rubicon Heritage Archaeological Services uncovered significant building material and a stone lined well dating from medieval times. Interestingly, fragments of 13th and 14th century pottery found in one of the trenches indicated that there had been activity in the area even before the chapel had been built.

The chapel would have been similar to the chapel building that can be seen within the grounds of Craigmillar Castle and is thought to have been converted into a stable at the time the farmhouse was built in the mid 1700's.

Some years back, a stone font was discovered on the site by the farmer at Bridgend which was donated to the Edinburgh City Museum. And a remnant of the hunting lodge can be seen displayed in the entrance hall to Inch House - a stone carved panel showing the medieval arms of the City of Edinburgh flanked by two shields.

5 The Craigmillar Sycamore

Until fairly recently the battered stump of an ancient sycamore tree stood at the foot of Craigmillar Castle hill on Old Dalkeith Road not far from the entrance to the new Edinburgh Royal Infirmary.

The tree was fondly called 'Queen Mary's Tree' from the tradition that it had been planted by the queen herself.

The old tree gained some fame when, in 1886, Queen Victoria, stopping on her way from Dalkeith Palace, asked that it be protected by a metal fence which was then erected by Walter James Gilmour. She also wanted to have a relic of the tree and had its' photograph taken and framed with its' wood.

The tree had produced a large number of seedlings, some of which she arranged to be transplanted in the Craigmillar estate and at Linlithgow Palace. Others were sent on to Windsor and Balmoral. This episode was reported in the newspapers and resulted in requests from round the world for seedlings from 'Queen Mary's Tree'.

