

The Farm House and the Trees

Once upon a time there was a burn, it ran through pasture and woodland and people came to live beside it, they hunted and fished and farmed and gave thanks.

By and by small villages grew up and grand estates.

In the 16th century a chapel was built on this land, near the hunting lodge of King James 5th the remains of a similar chapel can be seen at Craigmillar castle further up the hill.

Later the chapel became used as stables, the only clue to its' former purpose, a niche in one wall where once a statue had stood.

In 1566 Mary Queen of Scots fled to Craigmillar Castle after the murder of her faithful Italian secretary David Rizzio and spent many weeks there in deepest despair. She was six months pregnant and in an unhappy marriage to her jealous, drunken husband, lord Darnley.

It may have been then that Mary discovered the healing power of planting a humble seed...Below the walls of Craigmillar Castle, in Little France where many of her French advisors stayed, Mary planted the seed of a plane tree. This tree grew and grew, living for more than three hundred years. In 1881 after a storm damaged it, the local landowner made an application to cut some branches off. By the 1950's only a stump remained with a plaque to say who'd planted the tree, but now the site is wasteland, Queen Mary's tree only a memory, it's former location a mark on a map...

However near Melville castle on the banks of the river Esk, standing to this day, is an ancient sweet chestnut tree that David Rizzio, planted as a token of his love for Mary. An extravagant act of devotion which kindled Lord Darnley's jealousy toward the unfortunate man.

In 1800 the stables, which had once been a chapel, were renovated to become a labourers cottage, a farmhouse...

And this old farmhouse, stood there as long as people could remember. It used to be a working farm, but as the city grew around it, it was

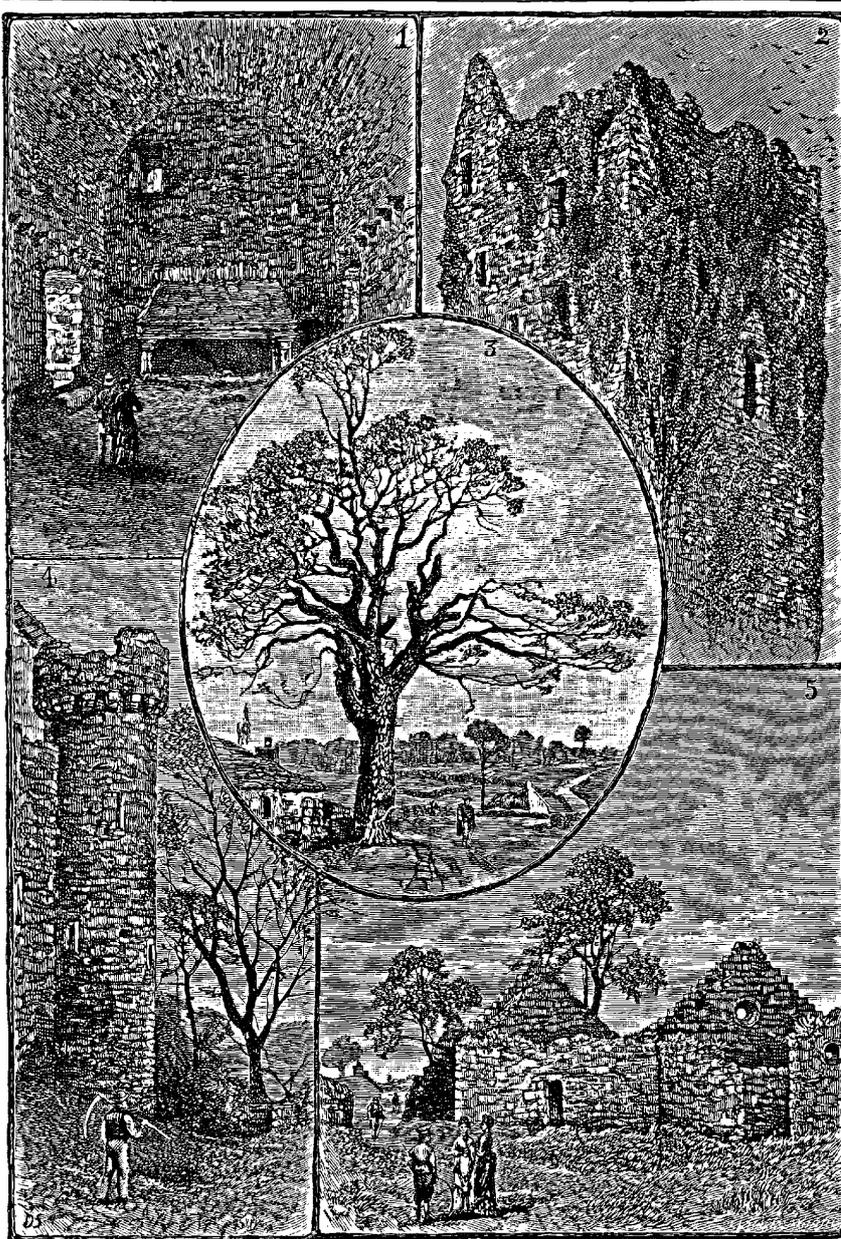
swallowed up and forgotten. As the years passed it fell into a state of disrepair, slates came off the roof, it leaked and wind whistled through cracks in the windows and by and by it was boarded up and left to decay.

Next to the farmhouse the land was given over to allotments where people could once more learn how revitalising it is to grow food, flowers and herbs.

People came to the land, some seeking something lost, a connection, a wholeness and healing their hands in the earth they learned once more to feel the passing seasons, investing hours of care and patience tending their plots and by and by the most important thing of all began to grow, hope.

Some of these people thought it would be wonderful to share all they'd learned on the land to help others and rejuvenate the old farmhouse to welcome the whole community.

"Where should we begin?" the people wondered and as they talked about the history of the place, it's possibilities and who might come, one man said "What we need is a really good story"...



CRAIGMILLAR CASTLE.

1, The Hall; 2, The Keep; 3, Queen Mary's Tree; 4, South-west Tower; 5, The Chapel.

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