

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE JULIAN AVENUE ALLOTMENTS

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KELVINSIDE

The land on which Julian Avenue allotments now stand has a very interesting history. The history of Kelvinside can be traced back many years. James Peadie, a wealthy Glasgow merchant had a massive estate which included a farmstead called Bankhead. In 1749 Peadie's heirs sold Bankhead to Thomas Dunmore, one of Glasgow's famous Tobacco Lords. Around 1750 Dunmore built a new mansion and changed the name of the estate to Kelvinside. The mansion was sited near Wilton Street and the corn mill at Garrioch, but was demolished in the 1870's.

Around 1770 Kelvinside was passed to Robert Dunmore, a leading merchant with a wide variety of business interests. In 1785 he disposed of Kelvinside and it was owned by Thomas Lithan, a doctor with the East India Company. After his death in 1807 it was leased for many years and in the 1830's it was being managed by a Glasgow Law firm Messrs. Montgomerie and Fleming of Miller Street. In 1839 Matthew Montgomerie and John Park Fleming bought the Kelvinside estate and formed the Kelvinside Estate Company. They intended it to be laid out with large villas, winding crescents and grand terraces fronting the new Great Western Road. Financial difficulties arose and they started to try to sell off parts of the estate, but in 30 years they had only managed to sell off 58 feus. In 1868/69 John Brown Montgomerie Fleming, the son of John Park Fleming took over the running of the estate and was much more successful in selling off feus as the demand was greater then. By 1873 he had sold off most of the estate east of Cleveden Road. In 1874 he built a mansion, Beaconsfield House on the west side of Balgray Hill. Until it closed it was the main building of Westbourne School for Girls.

REDLANDS

In 1869 James Buchanan Mirrlees, an engineer, bought 10 acres of ground from the Kelvinside Estate Company but three months later increased this to 24 Acres. The boundaries were Cleveden Road, Cleveden Drive, Bellshaugh Road, Kirklee Road and Great Western Road. The J. B. Mirrlees Company were world leaders in the manufacture of the machinery which refines sugar. J.B. Mirrlees's uncle had been sent to Demerara in the 1790's by Dennistoun, Buchanan and Co. a Glasgow firm of West Indian merchants. It is clear therefore that the land on which the Julian Avenue allotments now stand was at one time part of the Mirrlees estate. J.B. Mirrlees built a mansion house on his estate and called it Redlands. Redlands was completed in 1881. After purchasing the estate he refused to allow any building for 30 years. After his death the family began to sell off feus.

1920's and WORLD WAR 2

In the 1920's the owners of Mirrlees Drive were asked by the then owners of the ground on which the Julian Avenue allotments now stand, if they would like to purchase the land for a pleasure park. The offer was refused because the owners felt that there could be considerable expense involved, employing gardeners etc. A Redlands Garden Association was formed and they paid an annual rental to the owners of the ground.

After the start of World War 2 the Government mounted a 'Dig for Victory' campaign and the allotments were used extensively then.

HOMEOPATHIC HOSPITAL

In 1931 the Board of Management of the Homeopathic Hospital purchased Glentower, a mansion house at 1000 Great Western Road for their new hospital as their premises at Lyndoch Crescent had become too small. However after a few years at Glentower the Board wanted to increase their number of beds and started looking for another site. They considered various sites at Anniesland, Garscadden and Jordanhill but finally decided upon land at Julian Avenue, where our allotments now stand.

The site was purchased in 1936 and the design submitted by the architect James Taylor was accepted- A fund-raising campaign was started and a model of the proposed new hospital was displayed by Colville's at the Empire Exhibition in 1938.

It would seem as if the Mirrlees family had sold off part of the Redlands estate which they no longer wanted to the Kelvinside Estate Company as the board of Management of the Homeopathic Hospital bought the Julian Avenue site from the Kelvinside Estate Company At one point the Redlands Allotment Holders Association had to complain to the Board of Management of the Homeopathic Hospital, as surveyors were damaging the plots and the Association felt that the surveyors should not be there until the tenancies expired. The new hospital was never built partly due to difficulty in raising funds and the advent of World War 2. By the time the war was over, the creation of a National Health was being muted and in 1948 the Homeopathic Hospital became part of the National Health Service.

THE CHURCH OF THE LATTER DAY SAINTS (MORMON CHURCH)

In 1970 The Board of Management of the Homeopathic Hospital decided to sell the ground. An advert was placed in the Glasgow Herald. It attracted many buyers, including the McAlpin Nursing Home, Kelvinside Academy and Rannoch House. The allotment holders were given notice to quit. The offer submitted by the Church of the Latter Day Saints was the one accepted but the Church nearly had to withdraw, as they required planning permission to build a church, and the planning procedure proved to be very slow. In 1974 the Church sold the land which they did not require to the then Glasgow Corporation.

THE CORPORATION OF GLASGOW/GLASGOW DISTRICT COUNCIL

From 1970 to 1973 the state of the ground which had been allotments deteriorated. 'There were many letters of complaint to the Board of Management of the Homeopathic Hospital by the local residents in Julian Avenue of acts of vandalism, uncollected rubbish and broken glass. Even Glasgow Corporation also complained about the state of the ground. Finally, when Glasgow Corporation acquired the ground from the Church the ground was reinstated as allotments. At a later date the Corporation proposed to sell to the builders, Wimpy for houses/flats. Due to the efforts of the local Community Council, especially the Chairman who was an allotment holder, an appeal was made to the Secretary of State, Ian Lang who ruled in favour of the ground remaining as allotments. And so we have our treasured allotments today.

SOURCES

The following sources of information are acknowledged:

1. Kelvinside Heritage Trail. Produced by The Friends of Glasgow West
2. Great Western Road. Gordon R. Urquhart
3. Redlands. Derek A. Dow
4. Homeopathic Hospital. Correspondence between the Hospital and other parties. The Mitchell Library
5. Dr Helen Cargill-Thompson, Mirrlees Drive
6. Mrs M. Vickerman, Mirrlees Drive