Hermitage Wood

# From Hunting to Hermitage


Hermitage Weir, where the mill once stood


The Dovecot


Water pumps

The first recorded owner of this area was the son of a Belgium knight called De Brad, in the 12th century. Could this be where the name comes from? His son, Henri De Brad, was Sheriff of Edinburgh. He and his guests hunted for deer and wild boar in the forest which grew here.

We think a wooden tower house stood on the cliff above the present house. It later became a border-style tower possibly with battlements. We are not sure exactly where it was but many tower houses were built on tops of cliffs to give good views of the surrounding countryside and potential enemies.

**William Fairley** was given the area of Braid for his part in a daring raid on Edinburgh Castle in 1341. He upturned a cart loaded with wine and food, under the portcullis gate, and captured the castle from the English.

In 1585 Edinburgh was in the grip of the Black Death and thousands died. Sir Robert Fairley, who owned Braid at that time, provided ale from his brewhouses to relieve plague victims.

By 1631 the area was owned by William Dick, a wealthy merchant who gave large sums of money to the King and was knighted as a reward. Oliver Cromwell invaded Scotland and demanded compensation from all royal supporters. Sir William was left with no money and died in a debtors' prison at Westminster.

**Nicholas Dupyne** leased Braid in 1695 and replaced the existing corn mill with a paper mill. Deeds with the Bred-Dupyne watermark are held in Register House.

## History of The Hermitage of Braid

**Charles Gordon of Cluny** bought 4 acres of land around the Braid Burn in 1775. He employed architect Robert Burn to design a mansion house which you see today. He copied the style of the famous architect Robert Adam, and some of the original features are still visible. The house was finished in 1788. The mill was demolished and avenues of trees and lawns constructed. It was around this time that the other buildings you can see like the Dovecot, walled garden, stables and ice house were built.

The Dovecot housed pigeons which were eaten by the householders. The ice house was used to store food. It was kept cold by filling the base with ice collected from local ponds and wrapped in straw, so it melted more slowly.

*Agassiz Rock*

## Geologists to Rangers

he 19th century saw many famous visitors to the area. In 1840 the Swiss geologist **Louis Agassiz** declared that grooves in the rocks of Blackford Quarry were caused by glaciers. This was the start of a whole new area of geological study in Scotland.

In **1868** the house was let to **John Skelton,** a famous essayist and historian who was visited by many well known writers of the day including Robert Louis Stevenson.
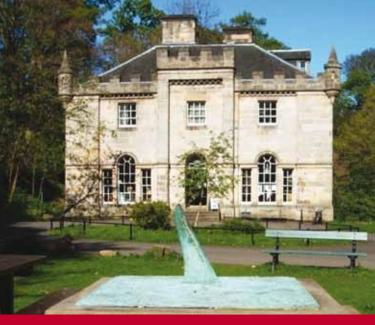
Blackford Hill was bought as a public park in **1884.** This was made possible by **Lord Provost Sir George Harrison** and commemorated by the arch at the bottom of Observatory Road.

The lodge house on Braid Road was moved stone by stone from its original location at 259 Morningside road, where it was a toll house. Look for the number above the lintel. In 1937

the Hermitage was presented to the city as a public park by the owner John McDougal. Since then Hermitage House has also been used by the Scouts.

A countryside ranger was employed in the early 1980s, and today Natural Heritage Officers who manage Natural Heritage Parks throughout Edinburgh are based in the house. Hermitage House is the Pentland Hills Regional Park Headquarter and office to Natural Heritage staff employed to look after Natural Heritage Parks in Edinburgh.

The Friends of Hermitage of Braid (FOHB) work closely with the Natural Heritage team to care for the Hermitage of Braid and Blackford Hill LNR.



## History of The Hermitage of Braid

**www.fohb.org**



## HAPPY TO **TRANSLATE**

ترجمے کے لئے حاضر    আনন্দের সঙ্গে অনুবাদ করব

يسعدنا توفير الترجمة    MOŻEMY PRZETŁUMACZYĆ    很樂意翻譯

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## History of The Hermitage of Braid



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