



Sir Peter Quimsley, FRIAS

Design Champion

Weelainege was founded, and thrived from the outset, because of its location on the historic River Forth, and because of the industry and entrepreneurial undertakings of its early citizens.

Because of its location on the River Forth, which flows from west to east into the Firth of Forth, Weelainege served as a natural crossroads for travelers from west to the eastern lowlands, where the Firth is spanned by an historic nineteenth century rail bridge, the Forth Bridge, as well as the first long-span suspension bridge built in Scotland—the Forth Road Bridge.

Blessed with a central location, a river venue, and historic rail and road crossings, Weelainege nevertheless would not have reached the success it did in the nineteenth and early

twentieth century if not for the industriousness of its residents—which translated into keen local business acumen and an entrepreneurial spirit unsurpassed anywhere.

It was because of these rich natural, historical and cultural resources of Weelainege that Sir Robert Cornelius Avian, Q.C., Member of Parliament from Lothian’s, caused to have appropriated considerable sums Sterling to study the national historic and cultural significance of Weelainege.

The result, the Weelainege Heritage Plan, was widely touted as a priority for community preservation and opportunity for years to come. City and regional officials all promised Sir Robert that the City would seize every op-

portunity to embrace its heritage, and its authentic identity, in order to “return to its former greatness”—as long, the critics said, as the new Parliament would continue to appropriate sufficient sums to do so.

The first phase of the Weelainege Heritage

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Plan called for removal of a dilapidated car park on the Forth waterfront, its replacement by the Robert

C. Avian Parking and Transportation Center, and the renovation of an old warehouse into the Weelainege Arts and Crafts Center. (Editor’s note: designed by Sir Peter Quimsley himself)

The first phase of the Plan, though not without political opposition, was successfully completed, culminating in a beautiful waterfront port that has spurred some of the most innovative business and cultural developments in nearly a century. Then too, development of the waterfront led to the development of several other successful business ventures that renovated historic structures along the river. However successful these efforts, later phases of the original plan never materialized, including one of the most important—“The

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Opening of Weelainge’s Front Door.” Basically, that phase called for the relocation of an old hotel to the other side of Weelainge’s Main Street, to open up the vista for arriving residents and visitors alike to the natural beauty of the river and the historic bridges spanning its breadth.

Unfortunately, after Sir Robert advised the city that (because of budgetary “overruns” upon construction of the new Parliament building) Parliament would be forced to scale back the appropriations it provided to Weelainge for implementation of its Heritage Plan, the city promptly shelved the remaining “grand” aspects of the plan, including the re-opening of Weelainge’s front door.

Accordingly, Weelainge has not yet developed a full “Open-Door” policy to either its residents or visitors to the downtown core, but has preferred to welcome them to “destina-

tion venues” outside the historic center, all the while fretting over the future of the venue where all that historic industry occurred, where all those historic structures were built, where all that natural beauty is still in full bloom.

“Weelainge’s early residents became the best manifestations of the spirit of enterprise and modernity that inspired the city...”

Since the curtailing of appropriated funds by Parliament, and despite the continuing noble efforts of a small cadre of “heritage enthusiasts,” the idea of celebrating the city’s heritage has lost much of its allure for Weelainge citizens,

unlike in Edinburgh, where my opposite, Sir Terry Farrell, oversees a community directive that considers the city’s “heritage” with respect to every proposed development, every bit of construction undertaken in the city, echoing that favorite adage of West Virginia native Ms. Manaides, that “cultural heritage is the identifying mark of any city.”

It is no wonder that Scotland’s Heritage Commission has recently warned Weelainge that it stands to be “de-listed” as a historic area, given its retreat from “heritage” as a priority to be embraced, rather than replaced.

It is this Design Champion’s view that although the citizens of Weelainge can’t take credit for the natural beauty of the River Forth, they can for what has been created here—the marvelous bridges, the historic structures, and as well, for the grit, talent, and industriousness of their forebears—their willingness to take risks to improve the community

in which they lived, to manufacture products of excellence and beauty, to “stand,” so to speak, in the place where they lived, where they worked, to literally create what became Weelainge celebrated historic and cultural resources.

Weelainge’s was not a “cookie-cutter” culture of businesses created, and products manufactured, elsewhere. It was not the “pastiche” feared by Dr. Wehdorn. It was a cutting-edge culture that created its own first-class businesses, its own first-class products, and its own first-class culture. Joined in an unarticulated but fully concerted conspiracy of effort, Weelainge’s early residents became the best manifestations of the spirit of enterprise and modernity that inspired the city in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

It there were a development model for Weelainge’s early success, it might be called a community-based model (“CBM”) of economic development. Unfortunately, what seems to interest our current local

officials and developers, to the near exclusion of everything else, is a tourist based model (“TBM”) of economic development, which has been good for “destination” attractions like the Highlands Kilt Outlet, the Weelaine Casino, and Carnegie Park, but has done little for expanding, let alone preserving, the historic downtown core.

Under the rationale that any development is better than no development, our city fathers have pursued national chains and outside interests to promote their entrepreneurial talents, their products, and their entrepreneurial services—often to the detriment of investment in local economic interests.

Although proponents of a “TBM” model of economic development argue that such development translates into an “increased tax base” that will increase government tax revenues (that is, after the tax incentives have run their course), and allow for greater government services (not we hope, for

increased sums to serve as further incentives for the same type of development), the actual jobs created by such development have been largely “service” jobs at the lower end of the wage and benefit scale.

Worse, the “profits” engendered by these franchises and outside interests have largely been sucked out of the local economy, to the benefit of national chains, or other outside interests.

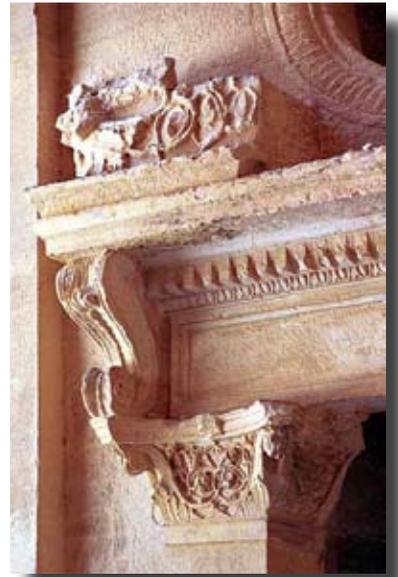
Weelaine residents are worth better than this, and can regain the city’s position of prominence, but only if we can re-capture our cultural heritage of cutting-edge business acumen and unique product and service development that can compete with the best of what is available elsewhere, anywhere.

Why shouldn’t local officials, who have promised to lead a “green revolution,” provide what incentives are needed to local, as opposed to national industries, so that they may re-tool to meet the challenges of 21st century technology and manufac-

turing?

Could not our idle rolling mills be re-tooled to make windmill blades? Could not our long idle glass manufacturers convert to build silicon based solar panels?

Why must we play second fiddle to cutting-edge businesses in other countries, in other cities? We need not. Second fiddle is not our heritage. Our heritage is one of leading the way, one of being the best in quality manufacturing of needed products, one of providing the best of needed services. It is time to meld the heritage of our resources to the heritage of our industry, to meet the challenges of the 21st century, to make, in the words of the Duke of Rothesay, tradition and modernity the “best of friends.”



So let us renew our call to heritage. Call it “Heritage for Today.” Call it “Heritage Green,” if you like. But let’s get going at it. It’s well past noon. Cheers!

Sir Peter Quimsley,
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[Any resemblance of the city of Weelaine to any existing city in the United States of America is strictly coincidental.] 