

The story behind the Memorial Cross: J. Lindsay Auldjo Jamieson

Narration (Jared Dunn, January 2014)

At the bottom of the Common Bank, at Blue Back bridge, is a memorial cross that I've driven past dozens of times but pausing to read the inscription whilst walking past one wintry day in January 2014 led me to a bit of internet research. Who was '*J. Lindsay Auldjo Jamieson*' and what was behind his accidental death here in 1895?



To understand that we have to understand the bicycle craze of the 1890s. By the 1890s, bicycle design had improved sufficiently enough to inspire a hey-day of cycling that lasted from 1895 to the early 20th century. At first, the pastime became a fashionable craze for young affluent middle-class trend setters, and anyone who desired to stay up to date purchased and rode a bicycle.

It was the invention of the safety bicycle, with its chain-drive transmission and inflatable tyres, that led to the boom of cycling in the 1890s. Very quickly the penny-farthing passed out of fashion and on-trend people around the country began riding 'The Safety'.



'*J. Lindsay*' was James Lindsay, eldest son of one of the founders of modern accountancy in Scotland. As the eldest son of George Jamieson he was born here in a fashionable Edinburgh terrace (*photo left*) and, as his father's fortunes grew, he moved alongside his family and father's

household to a more upmarket Edinburgh townhouse in Drumsheugh Gardens (*photo right*). He attended Winchester School in England and then Edinburgh University.



As the eldest son he was expected to, and did, follow his father into accountancy. But by all accounts, his passion was always engineering. Perhaps reflected in his early adoption of the bicycle. After a brief time in accountancy, in 1891 he left Scotland for a career in engineering in Newcastle. And so to Northumberland.

So, on the 16 June 1895, 24-year old Lindsay must have been a pioneering sight riding his bicycle in the Allen Valleys, when he turned down the steep Common Bank – heading down to the Blue Back Bridge.

Then, as now, it's a very steep bank and the turn is 90-degrees. So, we can only imagine how Lindsay failed to navigate the bend on his bicycle. My grandmother (born 1914) certainly passed on the local folklore that he hit, and was then thrown over, the stone dyke at the bottom of the hill. What is known though, is that his father was devastated by the loss and by all accounts never recovered. He ordered the memorial cross to be erected and that flowers be left on the spot every 16 June onwards. He died within five years of his son.

So, that's the story of the cross as I pass by 118 years later – very damp but thankfully very much alive!

Sources

Various authors; *George Auldjo Jamieson*; Wikipedia (accessed 4/3/18)
(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Auldjo_Jamieson)

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