

## Donaldson's Background

The first school for the education of Deaf children in Great Britain, Braidwood's Academy, was founded in the first quarter of 1760 in a small Georgian villa in the south side bordering Holyrood Park with a direct view of the magnificent Salisbury Crags on Arthur's Seat. The Deaf pupils signing on their way to school gave the name Dumbiedykes to the road and today it is proudly extended to the entire district.

Unfortunately, Thomas Braidwood and his school emigrated to England but at least some of the Academy staff stayed on to teach in the Edinburgh Royal Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in 1810 under the brief headship of John Braidwood.

Edinburgh Royal Institution for the Deaf and Dumb was also close by Holyrood Park in Chessels court, now in part a University residence, and later moved to 34 Henderson Row. It existed as a separate school until 1938 when it was merged with Donaldson's Hospital.

Donaldson's Hospital was founded by the generosity of James Donaldson, printer and bookseller who, in 1830, left his fortune to fund the construction and maintenance of the building that housed the school until 2007. The building was designed by William Playfair, a leading figure in Edinburgh's Enlightenment who designed many of the buildings that are crucial to Edinburgh's most famous views such as across the Mound to the Castle and of Calton Hill.



The influence of Donaldson's former pupils on Deaf communities throughout the world has been immense. From 1850 until the outbreak of the Second World War, Donaldson's operated a unique system of integrated co-education, whereby half of the children were Deaf and half had normal hearing. The familiarity of the hearing pupils with Sign Language led many into teaching, interpreting and social work with Deaf people. These hearing former pupils did much to bridge the divide between Hearing and Deaf communities.

Awareness of Deaf History has spread world-wide by means of the Deaf History Review, Deaf tutors teaching Sign Language to hearing parents and others and Deaf students being encouraged to realise their potential and to create a greater understanding of Deaf issues.

### References:

- *Silent Destiny: a brief history of Donaldson's College and the origins of education of Deaf children in Edinburgh, Scotland and the world.* Scottish Workshop Publications (1997)
- *Deaf History Review Vols 1-5.* Scottish Workshop Publications, Edinburgh (2004-7)
- *Dumbiedykes Leads the World.* British Deaf News. Raymond Lee. London. (1996)