

Spurtle

**December
2007**

BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER

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Free

COUNCIL TO HEAR VIEWS – BUT WILL IT LISTEN?

Edinburgh's troubled Education, Children and Families Committee has set up a cross-party "forum" to review the school estate and pupil numbers. Parents, Community Learning and Development Centre committees, young people, headteachers, and union and church representatives will be consulted.

"We must ensure that this time we get a consensus of opinion before proceeding with any proposals to public consultation," said Convenor Marilyn MacLaren. But with no clarity about *who* is consulted, to set *what* criteria, in an as yet *unclear* time-frame, no wonder there are strong suspicions that closures and reprieves have already been decided. "I am in no doubt that Plan B is under way," says Lynda Flex, Chair of Drummond's parent council. "I have no confidence in this administration's ability to be open, transparent and accountable."

Last month Drummond parents quizzed politicians at a meeting chaired by Independent MSP Margo MacDonald. The schools crisis has brought elected representatives' performances under intense scrutiny, and the discomfort of some when asked if they would follow conscience or party policy was widely noted.

Campaigners, though, are confident about Drummond's case. Academics at Moray House will vouch for its high-quality teaching and the benefits of learning in a "small" school. Drummond's value for money is also good, not least since in August the Council cut its budget by £16,000.

For more information about "Edinburgh City Centre Needs Drummond", contact Val Quigley (Tel. 258 2855).

PEDESTRIANS CROSSING AND BOTHERED

Pedestrians are worried about the dangerous junction of McDonald Road and Leith Walk. The phasing of traffic lights already favours cars over walkers, but some drivers jump the lights even as children are going to or from school, and problems worsened during recent roadworks in preparation for the trams.

Harald Tobermann, Vice Chair of Leith Walk school council, contacted TIE demanding improved signage and layout at the junction. He also asked for assurances that pedestrian safety would be prioritised in the construction and design of future streetscapes and tram-stops in the area. TIE replied positively and invited Tobermann to meet their design team in the coming months.

This may be genuine responsiveness, or corporate blandness, but continued attention to detail by locals is definitely required. In November TIE revealed plans to change the London St/Leith Walk intersection from a roundabout to a T-junction with lights prioritising trams. Will pedestrians, especially children, be remembered in the rush to speed traffic?



BACK TO THE FUTURE ...

Last month we reported on the "Gardener's Cottage" threatened with demolition under plans for Haddington Place. Now there are moves to ensure that this last relic of Leith Walk Garden (predecessor to the "Botanics") is saved. Friends of Hopetoun Crescent Garden (FHCG) applied on 22 Nov. for a Heritage Lottery Grant in order to record the significance of the building and to undertake an interpretation project. With support from the Royal Botanic Garden and the Cockburn Conservation Trust, FHCG will also explore dismantling the cottage and re-erecting it in Inverleith. The Architectural History Society, the Garden History Society of Scotland, the Gayfield Association, and Broughton History Society are backing them.

Dating from 1773, the cottage was once the pivotal structure in a 6-foot-high dyke. This enclosed a 5-acre garden containing two hothouses, a large glasshouse, a grove of forest trees and a pond for aquatics. When the holdings transferred to Inverleith in the 1820s, nearly 4000 species were recorded. Visit [www.hopetouncrescentgarden.org.uk] for more details.

Briefly

Broughton History Society will hold its **Christmas party on 10 Dec.**, 7–9pm at Drummond CHS, members only, tickets £5. On 7 Jan. (same time/venue) Chris Tabraham talks on “Napoleonic Prisoners in Edinburgh Castle”. Guests’ entry £1, members go free.

The **Broughton Project Group (BPG)** has got a fresh lease of life. Pat Eccles, founder member and former Secretary, says that – whilst remaining quite separate – by welcoming members of the Broughton Village Association onto its Committee on 12 Nov., BPG has accessed a rich vein of **local knowledge and activism**. The group’s aim is still to promote environmental improvements across the area, and work will focus first on **Barony Street Playpark and Community Garden**, and more tree planting at Broughton Point.

Broughton Village Association’s **AGM** will be at 7.30pm on 12 Dec. at Drummond CHS (room to be decided so follow signs). Plans for the new Barony St playground and community garden will be presented.

Broughton St Mary’s Church in **Bellevue Crescent** invites all ages along at 6.30pm on **Christmas Eve** when a panel of judges will help work out what puts the ‘X’ into ‘Xmas’ in the ultimate Christmas Show – **The Xmas Factor!** Not to be missed!

Broughton Primary School’s **Christmas Concert** will take place at Broughton St Mary’s Parish Church on 14 Dec. at 10am. Entry, only by ticket from school, for family and carers. **Bring handkerchiefs.**

Staff at Tesco’s, Broughton Road, have raised nearly £600 for Radio Forth’s ‘Help a Child’ Appeal. Seven brave souls spent an hour each sitting in a bathful of cold **baked beans, jelly, rice crispies, cream, water and spaghetti**, all the while smiling at customers and collecting donations. One witness says it resembled a particularly gruesome episode of “Ready, Steady, Cook!”

Refurbishing **Glenogle Baths** will cost about £5.8m, over twice the £2.1m quoted to councillors in 2003. This sum won’t be available before 2011, but the pool is sound enough to stay open for now. Alternative sources of funds are being sought.

This is the last **Spurtle** of 2007. Normal service resumes in Feb. In the meantime, we wish you a very happy festive season: **Merry Christmas**; gëzuar Krishtlindja; Krismas ki subhkamna; Nollaigh chridheil; Wesołych Świąt.

New friends in Africa

Broughton Primary School has been hosting a headteacher from northern Malawi, *writes Alan Devine, Headteacher.*

Duncan Tembo from Area 1B Primary School, Mzuzu, was here for 10 days, and we had many interesting discussions. There were similarities between our experiences (e.g. the way policies change with each change of government) and differences – especially resources such as school buildings, furniture and teaching materials. Resources in Malawi are absolutely minimal. He spoke to the children at a special assembly and they were astonished to hear that his school starts at 6.30am with 15 minutes of pupils sweeping and clearing litter. Classes are large (60–100+) and most teaching takes place outside under the trees.

Pupils will be exchanging letters and photographs soon, and we hope to help by sending materials and fundraising. We’re looking forward to strengthening links and learning more about each other in future.

Broughton PS was one of four Edinburgh schools hosting six headteachers and education officials in a project run by the Scotland–Malawi Partnership.



Bellevue floods – a possible solution

Historic maps have suggested a way to reduce floods in Bellevue Rd. In the 19th century, Broughton Burn ran from Queen’s St Gardens down Barony St, Broughton St and across the cow paddock which became Bellevue School (today’s Drummond). The burn is now underground and rain can’t drain into it efficiently through the asphalt jungle above. Downpours stay at the surface and are accelerated across the playground towards those areas recently flooded.

Spurtle wondered whether making some of the playground water-permeable, using grass-friendly paving, would help. Councillor Blacklock described the solution as “an innovative idea which would not only solve a problem but improve the area,” and has asked the Neighbourhood Partnership Environment Manager to consider.

The times they are a-changing

James Ritchie & Son (Clockmakers) Ltd is moving from Broughton Street.

After 45 years of making, repairing, selling and generally psychoanalysing temperamental timepieces, the much-loved shop will move to 35a Dundas Street (formerly the “Doll’s Hospital”) in early January 2008. “The new basement premises are bigger,” says Managing Director Ian Anderson. “They suit us down to the ground.” Ritchie’s has operated in the city since 1805, and is responsible for servicing and adjusting most of the capital’s church and public clocks.

Coffee...with strings attached

Plans for a new cafe and music venue on Union Street have been announced.

Gordon Richardson, the businessman who set up the Edinburgh Beanscene chain, aims to convert the former photographer’s studio into a 200-seat venue by next summer. His intention is to host performers seven nights a week.

Edinburgh already boasts several similar-sized venues, but Richardson aims to sidestep the competition by focusing on “intimate” acoustic sets from established artists rather than rock and pop.

Broughton heroes: Robert Garioch, poet (1909–81)



Robert Garioch belongs to the glittering pantheon of 20th-century Scots vernacular poets which includes Hugh MacDiarmid, William Soutar and Sidney Goodsir Smith, *writes Ross MacLean*. Best known for his humorous and satirical poems which both excoriated and celebrated his beloved “Embros” high and low lives, he was also a brilliant translator of the 19th-century Italian poet Guiseppe Belli, and of Hesiod and Pindar.

It is perhaps less well known that Garioch was a son of Broughton, being born at 109 Bellevue Road. His father was a painter-decorator: examples of his skill are still seen in the gold-leaf house numbers on fanlights in Bellevue Road. Both his parents were musically gifted. His mother taught the piano as well as the mandolin, and she was also the “pianny wumman” at Saturday matinées in the Picturedrome in Easter Road.

In the 1930s, Garioch himself was one of the last picture-house pianists in the Lyric in Nicolson Street. He recorded how he sat beside Houdini in the balcony and “even shook hands with him, which took some courage because we believed he could squeeze the juice out of a golf ball”.

Garioch attended St James’s Episcopal School at 103 Broughton Street, now the Stafford Centre, before proceeding to the Royal High School and university. He wrote: “I was brought up as a Scottish Episcopalian maybe because my mother went not for the doctrine but the music, and a very good reason too.”

He is commemorated by a plaque at his adult home in Nelson Street, in the painting “Poets’ Pub” in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, and by an engraved, paved quotation at Makars’ Court outside the Writers’ Museum.

Accompanying the “Broughton boy” on his peregrinations across “Embros to the ploy” will always be a truly uplifting and scintillating experience.

Politicians fail young voters

Adam Ramsay writes: The last Edinburgh University student elections in March had a 25% turnout. When Green MSP Mark Ballard beat Conservative MP Boris Johnson for Rector in February, 30% voted. In November, hundreds of Edinburgh students turned up at the Annual Student General Meeting to vote in favour of the University selling its shares in RBS and Total over alleged unethical practices.

These voting figures are far higher than ever before. This generation of students has grown up with Iraq, Make Poverty History, and looming climatic catastrophe. Unlike recent generations, we give a damn. Yet political parties have failed to understand this. Politicians assume young people won’t vote, they put little effort into courting us, and when we don’t join them this seems to fulfil their prophecy. But young people form the backbone of campaigns across the country – and surely we would engage with political parties if only their policies dealt with more of the issues relevant to us.

Politicians say we’re apathetic. That’s a pathetic excuse.

Neighbourhood botch

Adam Ramsay’s piece in November’s issue (“HMO Quotas – Social Engineering?”) stirred one reader to contact us.

The Scotland St resident – who wishes to stay anonymous – is fed up with the disruption, squalor, and pressure on parking caused by some short-term HMO tenants with no concern for permanent residents around them. The fact that not all HMO tenants behave this way is of little comfort, he says, as they come and go so often. Short summer lets to Festival troupes are a particular nuisance.

Spurtle staff have experienced both sides of the issue, and can only point out that having owner-occupiers living next door is no guarantee of peace and harmony either. However, when goodwill, courtesy and common sense all go up in smoke, there is at least the Council to fall back on. Here are some useful telephone numbers: the HMO Helpline – 0800 085 4667; Anti Social Behaviour Investigation Team – 529 7050; Noise – 529 3030 (day), 311 3131 (night); Public Health – 469 5641.

Spurtle welcomes reaction to all articles. See p.1 for contact details, or use our letterbox at Narcissus Flowers, 87 Broughton St.

Belle's View

Hi fans



Tra-la-la and Ding dong! What festive holiday fun is to be had in tinsel-tressed and twinkly frosted Broughton?

As usual, it doesn't look like we'll be having any snow – dullsville! So pull on yer furry boots and hat and get along to see some fake stuff at **The Playhouse!** Hoary old roast-chestnut *White Christmas* is on until 8 December with a star-studded cast of ex-Neighbours hunk **Craig McLaughlan**, craggily handsome **Ken Kercheval** of **Dallas** fame, and **Judy Garland's** daughter, the gorgeous **Lorna Luft**. With a massive honking 17-piece orchestra, tap dancing, fab costumes and great sing-along songs, this show will get the cranberry sauce flowing! Daily 7.30pm (Wed and Sat Matinees 2.30pm) £14.50–£37, 0870 606 3424 for tix.

Still raking around for that perfect Christmas pressie? What about a funky piece of original art? Uber-chic **Pearce's Bar** of **Elm Row** is currently staging an art exhibition of 30 leading Scottish artists, including award-winning **Jock McFadyen**. The eclectic collection of work includes oil, water and acrylic paintings, pastel drawings, stone and earthenware pieces, photographs, screen prints, mixed media and digital illustrations. The artworks will be auctioned off to raise funds for **Barnardo's Scotland**, which helps vulnerable children and young people in Edinburgh, on 5 December at 6pm. For more info contact [emily.filose@barnardos.org.uk]

So that's it for another year, dear Readers – I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy holiday season, and I look forward to more *Spurtle* stirring in 2008!

Till next time

PERSEPHONE BELLE

New Town/Broughton Community Council

Vacancies for Community Councillors

The Community Council represents the views of local residents to Edinburgh City Council.

For information on next meeting, please contact

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10.30am Royston/Wardieburn
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5.30pm Constituency office

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