

CITY PLANNERS TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

Planning Committee members will visit McDonald Rd to understand the size and setting of proposals for the Martin & Frost site. Protestors went to City Chambers on 21 Feb. and Councillors Brock and Chapman presented their case against Unite Group's £22m scheme. They stressed they were *not against students*, but this and similar developments were affecting a balanced community contrary to the Hopetoun Village Action Plan. They also opposed more traffic near the Bellevue Rd nursery, overshadowing and loss of privacy, lack of landscaping and consultation about building materials. They urged councillors to visit.

Officials had earlier argued Unite's scheme matched one already approved. Buildings would reflect nearby tenements and follow the existing road plan, they said. A 24-hour concierge service would control the 295 on-site residents, most of whom would probably be overseas students without cars. No planning permission was sought for a bar, which would require separate consent. It was an acceptable mix of residential and commercial uses, they concluded, with no likely impact on parking or traffic and an "acceptable" effect on local amenity.

The Committee was not convinced. Questions were asked about how the local student population was calculated, about loss of amenity through gable end windows being blocked, overshadowing, and the density of the development and size of rooms. One described the plans as "reminiscent of a Soviet-era barrack block." Jackie Bell, one of the objectors, said afterwards: "Obviously it's not over yet, but we're delighted with the progress so far. The Committee seemed impressed with the numbers who turned up, and they deserve credit for giving us a fair hearing."

(See Adam Ramsay, p. 3.)



COUNCIL SPLASHES OUT ON SWIM CENTRE

The Council has found £5.3m to fund a major revamp of Glenogle Baths.

At first Glenogle looked set to close. Despite an admission by the Chief Executive that the listed 19th-century building was in "poor physical condition and requires significant ... investment for the repair of physical defects and to create access for disabled clients", no funding was recommended in the draft Capital Investment Plan (2008-11) set for 21 Feb.

However, in a surprise move on 16 Feb., Councillor Brock (Culture and Leisure Convener) announced that "prudential borrowing" by the Council would allow a full refurbishment and upgrade of the listed building. Work can begin at once. All this at a time of financial crisis and budget black-holes.

Prudential borrowing, also known as the "rabbit-out-of-a-hat trick", sounds like a way of paying for things the city can't afford by promising to pay back a debt with revenues the city hasn't yet received. Quite how this represents "prudential borrowing" rather than "optimistic spending" is unclear.

Whatever the merits of Glenogle's case, the Council seems to have buckled before a spectacularly well-run campaign. Organisers alerted heritage bodies and media to the problem, gathered over 1000 supporters' contact details (e.g. at last summer's Tree Festival in Inverleith Park), coordinated that support via emails and a website, and provided allies with information-packs and draft letters before lobbying 53 councillors face to face at their surgeries. The result was cross-party backing for the cause.

Marjorie Mantle, Chair of the Supporters, commented: "This is great news for all those who have supported the campaign over the past 12 months, and we are pleased that the Council has recognised the strong support from the people of Edinburgh." See: [www.saveglenoglebaths.com].

Briefly

Broughton History Society will meet at 7–9pm on 3 Mar. in Drummond CHS. Mark Turnbull will talk on **Rosslyn Chapel**. Guests £1, members and Knights Templar free.

The **advisory Forum** considering cuts to Edinburgh's schools met again on 31 Jan. **Teachers' union** reps approved cost-effectiveness so long as they are closely involved in **how schools are evaluated**. Parents wanted to extend "**direct representation** on the Forum". A preliminary hit-list of primary schools was rumoured to be discussed on 29 Feb.

Locals still pining for Broughton Books may seek consolation at the annual **Edinburgh Antiquarian Book Fair** this month. Over 80 dealers, with an emphasis on Scottish titles, will gather at the **Assembly Rooms** on 14 Mar. (noon–6.45pm) and 15 Mar. (10am–5pm). Entry free

Easter services at **Bellevue Chapel** (Rodney St) will examine '**Easter=Perfect Love**' on 17 and 23 Mar. Coffee 11am, Service 11.30am.

Vandals attacked 6 picnic tables in Broughton PS playground over the half-term break, causing **hundreds of pounds' worth of damage**. Anyone with information should contact the Police or school.

School holidays start on Thursday 20 March. **Schools resume** on Monday 7 April.

Clocks go forward on Sun. 30 Mar.

Nooks and crannies

Readers are invited to identify the location of this proud but dishevelled lion rampant. Send your answers to Spurtle, c/o Narcissus Flowers, 87 Broughton St. The winner, picked from the shoogled hat, will receive a £15 book token. Answer and ruminations in April.



Time to stop talking

In December *Spurtle* reported concerns about foot crossings on Leith Walk, the positive but vague response from Trams in Edinburgh (TIE) and their invitation to attend future consultations. Now, it seems, TIE is falling over itself to be helpfully unhelpful.

In Jan., Pilrig resident Harald Tobermann contacted TIE again after traffic lights failed at the McDonald Rd junction during rush hour, leaving school-children struggling to cross the road safely. "I gather there are bureaucratic issues about budgets, funding and competence between TIE, CEC, the police etc. about how to deal with this," he wrote. "Frankly, I expect TIE to take the lead and at least in the short term to solve (and pay for) the issues as they arise, and more importantly to anticipate them." TIE's Community Engagement Co-ordinator Alf Orriell invited him to yet another meeting. Tobermann, a busy working parent who's attended and arranged dozens of meetings with TIE since 2004, was understandably exasperated. "I am happy to meet if there is anything that cannot be dealt with," he replied, "but I hope you will agree that for now it is TIE's job to implement the plans and ideas that have been discussed with local people over the last few years, and to do so in a safe and accountable way."

Tobermann's experience of dealing with TIE typifies the PR-savvy result-neutral style experienced by others, particularly small businesses. Community engagement is all well and good, but actions speak louder than words.

St James Quarter: What do you think of it so far?

Those wishing to return questionnaires about initial plans for a new St James Centre have until 17 Mar. to do so. Developers Henderson Global Investors propose to replace the East End eyesore with an £850m, 3-storey, crescent-shaped, glass-topped, retail-restaurant-residential-roof garden development of their own, inspired by the 19th-century Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II in Milan. Interestingly, they claim that the outline proposals are designed to reflect the New Town, an area where Italian influence today is confined to pretentious bathrooms and the wine section at Margiotta's. More controversial are city architects Allan Murray's aspirations to screen St Mary's Cathedral behind a new hotel, and to create an as yet unspecified "higher landmark element" on the city's skyline. Send your comments to: St James Quarter Consultation, 9 York Place, Edinburgh EH1 3EB.

MP needs help to nail shoddy housebuilders

Mark Lazarowicz, MP is contributing to a report for the Office of Fair Trading about problems people can face when they buy a newly built home. North Leith constituents have already told him that sometimes their properties were not ready on time, or that defects weren't sorted properly by developers, but he is still looking for more examples. The report follows a parliamentary debate on the subject, initiated by Lazarowicz, last month. Send your accounts of Bob the Corporate Cowboy, by email or post, to the addresses shown on page 4.

Harriet Barr (1925–2008)

Bellevue St has lost another "weel kent" face with the death of Mrs Harriet Barr (née Kidd), who died on 13 Feb.

She had lived in Bellevue since 1928, when her parents took over the Dairy at No. 2 Bellevue St, and helped in the business and delivered milk locally, making many friends in the area. This was at the time when the street was one-sided (before Miller's built the houses around here in the 1930s), and some of her childhood memories are included in the book of reminiscences featured in last month's *Spurtle*.

Harriet was a regular attender at Broughton St Mary's Church until ill-health prevented her. Unfortunately she lost her husband Bob prematurely, but is survived by her sons Alastair and Norman. *Jean K. Bell*



Behind the scenes of the museums

One of the elixirs of life in Broughton is discovering and sampling the unique flavour of Edinburgh's history and culture in unexpected surroundings. Such a draught may be imbibed in Broughton Market at Barony St's east end. No. 10 houses the city's Museums Collection Centre.

The Centre provides storage space for holdings of the Writers Museum, Museum of Childhood, Huntly House, and the Peoples Story Museum. It also cares for reserve collections of Lauriston Castle and the Queensferry and Newhaven Museums. Pre-eminently it carries out a conservation service for these museums, many of whose artefacts and *objets* are of national importance.

Space does not allow for a full account of this amazing depository and its thousands of holdings, or the meticulous conservation work of the staff, headed by Dr Dorothy Walsh. A mini-list might whet the appetite. Here you will find: Newhaven fishwives, a shard of Nelson's *Victory*, a glass roundel from the train that plunged from the doomed Tay Bridge, a wooden stool used by Robert Burns, a piece from a 16th-century painted ceiling, vintage wineglasses, a Stanley Baxter pantomime costume, and a 7-foot-high scale model of the Scott Monument.

This welcoming facility is open to the public on the first Tuesday of each month, and at other times by appointment for interested groups. Call Dorothy Walsh on 556 9536, or email: [dorothy.walsh@edinburgh.gov.uk].



Tale of the unexpected

Last month we asked for your experiences of Broughton's street furniture. Audrey Mussett requested we highlight the "Mansfield Place Pole-tergeist": a temporary signpole about halfway between the bus stop and Bellevue Place which "sometimes has a sign and sometimes has a pole and occasionally manifests itself in mid-pavement as a dim grey presence". Unfortunately, there is nothing ethereal about the signpole's surface, which is very hard, as Mrs Mussett has discovered to her cost in poor light on two occasions. *Spurtle* contacted Road Services, who agreed the pole was "unsatisfactory" and will now remove it until a safer site can be found.

United students stand (to lose)

Adam Ramsay writes: Edinburgh has recently seen the arrival of several new student housing projects by Unite, the UK's largest private provider in this sector. Since 2004 there is supposed to have been a code of conduct for such providers, and for a charge (£108-73 per week in Edinburgh, including utilities but not deposit or administrative fees) Unite promises ensuite rooms, "modern living" where you can "sleep, safe and sound" in a properly maintained "home from home".

But friends renting from Unite in other cities allege horror stories of disputed deposits, extortionate hidden extras, and failure to make repairs even when sewage has spewed through the flat.

I believe Unite profits from scared, young people who are new to their adopted cities and have little time between getting a university place and needing a room. I believe Unite and other corporate landlords' charges are adding substantially to the *average* UK graduate's debt of £12,000. This is bad news for the economy as a whole, and is the biggest disincentive to people from poor backgrounds coming to university. In Canada, almost all students live in housing co-ops, and have some control over where they live. In the long run, HE institutions and the Council need to look hard at city-centre social housing.

Old wounds and new solutions

The Lady Haig Poppy Factory has stood at No. 9 Warriston Rd (behind Tesco's) since June 1966. Charlie Pelling, Manager, sets the context. Poppies grew in huge numbers on the battlefields of Western France during World War I and were immortalised in a poem by Scots-Canadian officer John McCrae: "In Flanders fields the poppies blow / Between the crosses, row on row". McCrae did not survive the war and is buried in one of the many war cemeteries in France. But his poem struck a chord and the poppy was adopted as a symbol of remembrance. Paper poppies were first made in France immediately after the war and then in England from 1919.

Lady Haig, wife of the wartime Commander of British forces in France, became concerned about the plight of disabled ex-servicemen in Scotland and opened her own Scottish Poppy Factory in 1926. Although the factory has moved a couple of times it has been in continuous production ever since. Currently we employ 30+ ex-servicemen, most of whom are registered disabled. In addition to manufacturing poppies we hand-craft well over 8,000 wreaths and have a printing and picture framing business. All are open to the public.

This year we will manufacture 4.7m poppies and distribute them throughout Scotland, along with 20,000+ collection tins and other items. We also build the Garden of Remembrance in Princes St Gardens, under the Scott Monument, where people can buy crosses and plant them in memory of individuals or organisations.

We welcome visitors to the Factory, Monday-Friday, 9am-4pm. Drop in or call: 550 1573.

Belle's View

Hi fans



Brrrrrrrrrr! Enjoying the cold snap? What's on to toast us up in swinging Broughton?

What about warming yourself up with a brisk jog? **Pearce's of Elm Row** have started a **Jogging Club**, every Tuesday at 7pm. Bask in the admiring gaze of bystanders at the bus stop as you jog from the pub all the way along Water of Leith down to sister bar **Sofi's**, where you will be rewarded with a glass of yummy lingonberry juice! And if your dog/cat/hamster is still carrying a little post-Christmas holiday weight, you can take them along too!

No point in toning up your body without doing the same for your inner-self – get on down to the Botanics for the **Mindful Peace Walk** on Sunday 9 March. This silent walking meditation will be led by members of the **Edinburgh Sangha of the Community of Interbeing**, who follow the practice and teachings of Zen Buddhist Master **Thich Nhat Hanh**. Starting at the East Gate of the Gardens at 9.30am, just turn up on the day – see details on the *Fifth Edinburgh International Festival on Middle Eastern Spirituality and Peace* website at: [www.eial.org].

Fancy something a bit noisier? The **Drummond CHS Big Event** on Saturday 1 March (11am–2pm) invites you to come along and try out some of their community education activities, including workshops in puppet and smoothie making, storytelling, belly-dancing, and singing for fun, along with an art exhibition and information stalls, accompanied by the fabulous sounds of the **Drummond Big Band** – and all for free!

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
Chris Richardson 07952 755 854
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Malcolm Chisholm MSP Edinburgh North and Leith



Constituency Office:
86-88 Brunswick Street, EH7 5HU
Tel: 0131 558 8358
Fax: 0131 557 6781
Saturday surgeries:
9am Leith Library
10.30am Royston/Wardieburn
Community Centre
12pm Stockbridge Library

Mark Lazarowicz MP for Edinburgh North and Leith

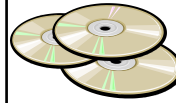


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Friday advice sessions:
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