

Spurtle

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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

BROUGHTON BUILDING AT RISK

Spurtle has previously highlighted the architectural and historical significance of the “Broughton Halls” at 32a Broughton St. We deplored the neglect of this fine B-listed building which has remained empty for several years. This has now been recognised by the City Council who have recommended that it be placed on the Scottish Civic Trust’s Buildings at Risk register.

The Civic Trust advises all levels of government on specific proposals and policy initiatives affecting Scotland’s built environments. It is currently undertaking a re-survey of buildings at risk due to deterioration or neglect. To date, its register highlights the condition of over 1000 endangered buildings throughout Scotland.

No. 32a, built in Scots Jacobean style in 1853, served as a satellite of George Heriot’s school in Broughton until 1889 when it was sold to St Mary’s Free Church. In the 1980s and ’90s it belonged to the Rifleman’s Lodge and functioned variously as a nightclub and Fringe theatre venue until it passed into other hands. Since then, the two substantial upper levels have been derelict and are reported to be pigeon-infested. Applications in 2006 to convert it to a pub, restaurant and entertainment centre were refused due to local opposition.

In *Spurtle’s* view, it is outrageous that a building of this distinction is being left to moulder. It is the only listed structure in Broughton St without occupancy or function. Privileged owners of major buildings have a responsibility not only to conserve but to utilise them in the interests of Broughton’s richly varied community. Privilege should not be considered as a right by owners to do what they like, which in this case appears to be nothing. *Spurtle* strongly supports the Scottish Civic Trust in bringing the plight of such an important building to wider attention. It is our fervent hope that No. 32a will be made safe and then imaginatively restored to Broughton without further delay.



Time to give pigeons their marching orders

MCDONALD ROAD REPELS BOARDERS

The Unite Group’s application for a £22m development at the former Martin & Frost site on McDonald Rd has been refused.

On 19 Mar., Planning Committee members agreed with local objectors that the proposal involved: poor design and inappropriate building materials; excessive overlooking of McDonald Place; and unnecessary blocking of gable-end windows in a neighbouring tenement.

The Committee also found the development inappropriate for the site, it being out of line with the Hopetoun Village Action Plan (HVAP). Together with Unite’s site at the other end of McDonald Rd, and its £11m aim for 260 students’ new digs at Shrubhill (approved on the same day), the scheme would have entailed an unacceptable rise in the number of Broughton students to 1.2% above the city average of 10%.

The Committee’s decision matters because it: (1) gives renewed relevance to the aspirations of the HVAP drawn up in the 1990s but believed by some to have been superseded; (2) suggests City planners are serious about balancing communities – in this case through challenging their own officials over spurious reassurances, then acting to limit a disproportionate influx of students to the area.

Whilst Unite is unlikely to go away, the rebuttal of its most recent plans gives grounds for hope. Well-organised locals, with articulate councillors in support, can influence serious-minded City planners. Developers must belatedly take note and tailor proposals to neighbourhoods. Profit before people is not an option.

City secondaries escape Council axe

Drummond CHS's immediate future is secure now that Edinburgh has postponed its review of secondary schools for at least 3 years. This will allow time for the effect of 6 new schools opening across the city to become clear. Meanwhile primary schools outwith Broughton continue to face imminent closure.

The move (announced on 1 Mar.) brings a temporary halt to a process marked by muddle and incompetence from the start. Gillian Tee, Director of the troubled Children and Families Dept, claimed the cross-party Forum had identified "educational reasons" for maintaining the status quo, and continued: "It will be important to analyse the impact of these new schools on parental choice before reviewing the secondary sector. Any further review would coincide with the new schools opening in 2010/11 so that, if there are changes, children can move straight into new buildings." Unfortunately 2011 is also the year in which the next local elections will be held, with all the political short-termism and expedient horse-trading that could involve.

So long as politicians prioritise budgetary considerations over educational ones, a comparatively small school like Drummond will face searching questions about its value for money. Over the next few years, parents and locals must continue to keep their eyes on the ball, and make the many very good reasons for retaining Drummond clearly understood at City Chambers.

Still walking barefoot for Burma

*Ewen Hardie, a Drummond CHS teacher, has been on a barefoot protest since September last year, and will continue until democracy is restored in Burma. Last month he gave **Spurtle's** Fiona Watt an update on his campaign:* This spring has brought a special sense of relief as I start to feel that I've been through the worst of the weather. Walking in snow and frost was an interesting experience but the novelty value soon wore off and I could not manage more than about half an hour before it started to become really uncomfortable. Still, this was enough to get me in and out of work.

It has been an interesting journey for me from the first few months when everybody wanted to know what was happening and I received daily messages from well-wishers. By this stage, it has taken on a sense of normality.

As the weather improves, I am looking forward to enjoying being barefoot, but also wondering about the validity of the action. Although uncomfortable, the winter weather drew attention to my bare feet, prompting questions from strangers, thus achieving my aim of highlighting the situation in Burma. I found that the discomfort connected me to the suffering of the people whose plight had motivated me and this added a personal dimension to the whole thing. Without the cold weather both things are diminished. *To maintain public awareness of the cause, Ewen is also considering walking barefoot to London during the school summer holidays to deliver a message to the Burmese Embassy. Read more at: [www.barefeetforburma.blogspot.com].*



Nooks and crannies

In **Spurtle's** February issue we invited readers to identify the location of a dishevelled lion rampant. He resides within a central panel flanked by two other diamond-shaped panels, once containing a thistle and a rose, on the facade of the unusual Edwardian building at Nos 3-5 Eyre Terrace. We will ruminate further on its history in a later issue. Congratulations to Mr Bill Dunlop whose name was the first to be shoogled from the hat. He wins a £15 book token with our compliments.

Tempus fugit

Spurtle's spies report that the renowned pillar clock located on the roundabout at the top of Leith Walk is now under wraps in a Council facility in Penicuik after its removal to accommodate the new tram system. Does the Council have audacious plans for its future placement? **Spurtle** does.

Surely its future home should be within the elegant roundabout at the foot of Broughton St. This would be apposite as it would be cared for by our own James Ritchie & Son, clockmakers extraordinaire, who service most of the outside clocks in Scotland, including 24 in Edinburgh. We all lament the loss of Ritchie's fine timepiece in Broughton St after the firm's transference to new premises in Dundas St. What do **Spurtle's** readers think? As the great poet McGonagall might have mused, "this would be a beautiful sight to behold for time immemorial".

Glass half-empty

It's an understandable worry that more students in Broughton will bring more disruption in their wake, writes "*Jaundiced of Claremont*". But before long, the boot will be on the other foot.

The next wave of students entering our HE institutions will largely comprise ambitious, intensely studious, Chinese high-flyers. They will have no taste for British binge-drinking party nonsense. Indeed, far from outraging the local citizenry, it is much more likely that these model scholars will be the ones complaining about the "respectable" natives around them.

Local 4x4-drivers fisticuffing over parking spaces, half-deaf accountants' widows listening to Wogan on ghetto-blasters, bloated BBQ-ers, and their hooligan offspring hooting and shrieking and breaking things in back-greens till God knows what time in the small hours of the morning will all soon find their traditional summer pastimes targeted by Council noise-police tasked to retain and maximise "yuan-spend".

The good times are over. Expect the first rash of ASBOs to be served on Broughton's delinquent property owners in Spring 2009.

Scotland's silver – the Broughton connection

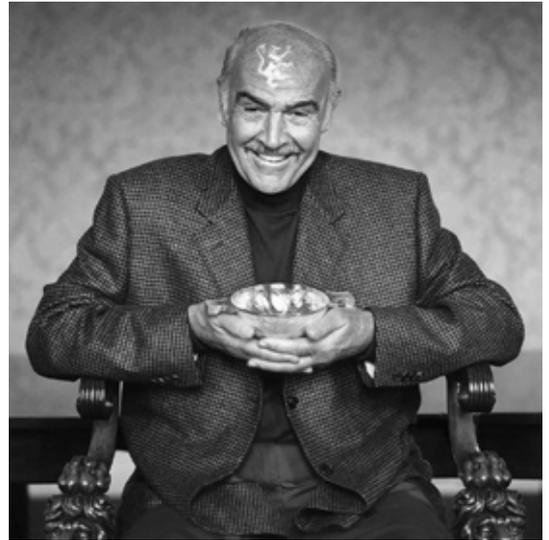
The current exhibition “Silver Made in Scotland” at the National Museum in Chambers St is one of the most comprehensive and unique displays of this beautiful precious metal ever mounted. It commemorates the 550th anniversary of hallmarking in Scotland and includes a specially commissioned section, “Silver of the Stars”.

As the exhibition catalogue states, “hallmarking constitutes the oldest continuous form of consumer protection in the world”. Hallmarks identify the maker of the piece of silver, its date, place of origin, and attestation of purity after testing or *assaying*. In Edinburgh, whose famous hallmark is a 3-turreted castle, this was and is overseen by the Edinburgh Corporation of Goldsmiths whose origins go back to 1458. Today, all of Scotland's silver is verified and stamped at the Assay Office at 24 Broughton Street (originally the Albany St Chapel building, 1816).

The exhibition encompasses a breathtaking spectrum of pieces from a drinking cup linked to Robert the Bruce to a teapot created for Lulu in 2007. Broughton's Assay Office had a special involvement with the exhilarating “Silver of the Stars” collection. Ten Scottish celebrities worked with 10 of the country's leading silversmiths on pieces with the theme of a “drink with a friend”. The finished articles range from the traditional (a quaiach for Sir Sean Connery) to the eccentric (Billy Connolly's tricycle teapot and a banjo spoon). Silver of the Stars is also a specially created charity which will benefit charities personally chosen by the stars. All the pieces bear the proud and ancient insignia of Scotland's hallmark stamped within the premises at No. 24 Broughton St.

There are two specific Broughton connections in the exhibition. The first is in the collection devoted to Kirk Silver. This comprises a communion cup, paten and flagon originally in the possession of St Paul's and St George's Church. These were presented to the church by Sir David Andersen of Moredun in 1881, and are now in the permanent holdings of the NMS. The second contains works by local silversmith, Graham Crimmins of East London St, in the contemporary section. *Spurtle* will profile Graham's artistry in the May issue.

Spurtle urges readers to view this marvellous exhibition which will resonate long in the memory. It continues to 27 Apr. For further information see: [www.nms.ac.uk/silver] and www.silverofthestars.com].



Sir Sean Connery with the quaiach made for him by silversmith Michael Lloyd. Photograph ©Alistair Devine

Welcome to your people's forum

Gaby Holden, Community Councillor writes: Community Councils are a modest but integral part of local government. They are not well known by the public, which is a pity because they exist precisely to form a link between residents and their councils. Their role is to promote the interests of local communities, to ascertain as far as they can their views and make them known to the Council or to other public authorities.

The New Town and Broughton Community Council has a maximum of sixteen representatives who are elected every three years, and it may also co-opt up to five members between elections. There are eight places for representation of local interest groups. At present four of these places represent local residents' associations, two represent political parties, one a group of churches, and one the local Pakistani Association.

Ex-officio members include our MP, our MSP, three City Centre councillors, four Leith Walk councillors and two police representatives. All of these attend the monthly meetings more or less frequently, as their time permits. The hope is that this permits a two-way process – on the one hand, they become aware of the various currents of local opinion, while on the other hand, they can warn of, interpret or justify official policies and decisions.

Examination of planning applications is an important part of the work of any community council. In order to explain a project, a spokesman is sometimes invited to a meeting. Recently the New Town and Broughton Community Council members have had informative presentations by TiE (Transport in Edinburgh) on the trams, and by Alan Murray (of Murray Architects) for developers of the St James Quarter on their vision of that area. As well as planning, there are sub-committees relating to Environment, Traffic and Licensing issues. Discussion sometimes concerns graffiti, parking, wheelie bins, and dog fouling. Very humdrum, but that is the stuff of modern urban living! Most people have views. The question is to find agreement and solutions. That's democracy. Vacancies remain. The council meets on the first Monday of the month (except August and January) in Drummond CHS at 7.30pm. The public is warmly invited to attend and participate.

Briefly

“**Photos of Portobello**”, presented by **Margaret Munro**, will be the subject of **Broughton History Society's meeting** on 14 Apr. in Drummond CHS, 7–9pm. Visitors welcome (£1), members free.

Timely greetings to Broughton St Mary's **mighty clock**, which was sadly disabled for several weeks. It is now fully restored after major surgery by **James Ritchie's** team of **consultant horologists**.

The **Northern Bowling Club** (in Warriston Crescent) will run **two open days** on Saturday and Sunday **19–20 April, 2.30pm**. New and experienced players, young (including children) and old are equally welcome.

During refurbishment of Stockbridge Library, **Mark Lazarowicz, MP** will hold his Friday advice surgeries at 4pm in the Theatre Workshop, 42 Hamilton Place (across the road from the Library).

At last, Broughton St will have its own bakery shop again. The **Bakehouse Co.** opens for business on **31 March**. It will have a large array of **bread**s, together with **pastries and savouries** made daily on the premises. There will also be a sandwich bar, sit-in area, and other delights in store. **Bon appetit!**

Belle's View

Hi fans



Hi Fans

Put down that crème-egg and step outside – spring has sprung! What's on for the pursuit of cultural eggstasy and enlightenment in swinging Broughton?

Attention all tattie-de-sofas - shirk off that winter woolie cardie-cocoon, as **Drummond CHS** is enrolling now for their summer adult education programme. Now is the time to release your inner (and as yet unrevealed) talents through tribal style belly-dancing, tapestry weaving, creative crochet or by learning to gabble away in Greek, French or Spanish! Call 0131 556 2651 or see www.drummondhigh.com.

Calling all Broughton artists – would you like to have your work seen by a thousand people per week? A fabulous exhibition space is now right on our doorstep – the **Edinburgh Central Youth Hostel** at **Haddington Place** is seeking artists to show their work in their spacious hostel lobby. Tracey Emin and Damien Hirst wannabees should call 0131 524 2090 and send examples of their work to edinburghcentralmanager@syha.org.uk. Can't paint? Just get along to see the artwork and enjoy a latte in the café!

Estelle and I are looking forward muchly to putting on our big hairy hats for Edinburgh Ladyfest 2008, a new global community based not-for-profit women's arts and music festival. The fest includes a launch gig at **The Ark, Leith Street**, on 4 May with bands Sellotape and Blud Slugs – check out www.myspace.com/ladyfestedinburgh for full listings and see you there!

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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Malcolm Chisholm MSP Edinburgh North and Leith



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Fax: 0131 557 6781
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9am Leith Library
10.30am Royston/Wardieburn
Community Centre
12pm Stockbridge Library

Mark Lazarowicz MP for Edinburgh North and Leith



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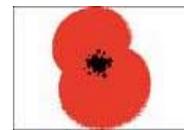
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