

# Spurtle



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**BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free**

## BROUGHTON PRIMARY PARENTS PUSH FOR McDONALD ROAD CHANGES

Broughton Primary School Parent Council's campaign for 154 McDonald Road to be used as classrooms not flats continues in advance of the rescheduled Council Planning Committee on 23 October (*Breaking news*, 20.8.13; Issue 222).

Frustratingly, the proposed removal of school space right next to a school needing *extra* space is not a 'material' objection. The planned flats' obtrusive overlooking of the playground may not count either, although their small floor area (mitigated partly by shared facilities, and mezzanines in the high rooms) and extra parking requirements may raise concerns.

Meanwhile, parents and developers Kingsford Developments are tentatively examining how temporary accommodation could be made available in 154 McDonald Road if the current Gym Hall and Nursery were replaced and extended with 4 extra classrooms. This would be a preferable outcome, and would allay fears raised by the enigmatic paragraph in Kingsford's design statement about 'Potential Future Development' here in 3-5 years.

Edinburgh Council emerges very poorly from all this. Its tactics here badly misjudged the public mood, do not enjoy wholehearted support from local politicians, and splits between its officials and their preferred buyer/developer appear to be opening. This is a hole entirely of the Council's own making. Now is the time to stop digging.



Visitors to St Andrew Square have been amused by the appearance of an imitation human being. The realistic model in the foliage draws attention to an exhibition about the adventures of David Livingstone in Africa at the National Library of Scotland until 3 November.

## LOCAL ACCIDENT 'BLACKSPOTS', TABLOIDS AND STATISTICS

St Mary's Primary School is one of the 'worst accident blackspots for children in Scotland' squealed the *Edinburgh Evening News* last month (16.9.13).

The claim stemmed from a new Local Road Safety Index compiled by Road Safety Analysis (RSA) for Axa Car Insurance. It is based on Department of Transport statistics about collisions involving children near schools between 2006 and 2011.

Twenty-eight collisions occurred within 500m of St Mary's Primary School over that period, second only to a primary school in Glasgow. Eighteen collisions occurred within the same distance of Leith Walk PS. However, given the closeness of Drummond CHS, St Mary's, Leith Walk and Broughton PS, there is clear capacity for double counting.

A little digging into RSA's own assessment reveals that: 'Figures take into account all incidents *regardless of*

*whether they were in school term times or not. They also incorporate both child and adult casualties.*

'The child casualty numbers do not necessarily mean children who belong to that particular school, as they could be *residents or children passing through the area* [our italics]. None of AXA's website links to the survey itself, or RSA's links to its detailed methodology, worked between 16 September and completion of this article eight days later.

*Spurtle* is not complacent about local road safety, but these statistics contain few reliable correlations between the accidents and the schools. A slightly clearer chart compiled by the Council reveals 15 accidents involving 5-15-year olds from 2006-11. Given the busy roads involved, these figures are not good but nor are they unduly surprising. See *Extras* (1.10.13).

Accident statistics are great for insurance firms and alarmist tabloids, but 49.894351% of them disintegrate on closer inspection.

## NO PROGRESS ON EAST LONDON ST

Recent accident statistics based loosely around St Mary's Primary School may be round the bend, but there are genuine concerns over road safety here.

East London St resident Robert Crombie points to the traffic island outside the school. The standard at its centre was demolished in a 'hit and run' last November and still has not been replaced.

Problems are worsened by subsidence on both sides of the street, which Crombie blames on recent heavy traffic (including over 100 buses per day).

Traffic speed is also a worry. Vehicles often exceed 40mph near the school and there are too few 20mph speed signs.

Ward 11's Councillor Joanna Mowat arranged meetings with Police and Council officials in May, but there has been a distinct lack of progress since. She will ask them to revisit the issue, and arrange for traffic to be monitored now that York Place has reopened.



## AFFORDABLE HOMES PLAN FOR BEAVERBANK

Beaverbank Place LLP (BP) seeks consent to replace warehouses at 29-30 Beaverbank Place with 41 flats in two blocks of 5 and 4 storeys (Ref. 13/03575/FUL).

The plan entails 'much needed' mid-market 1-bedroom (14) and 2-bedroom (27) flats for rental, operated by the Dunedin Canmore Housing Association by late 2014. At some future date, tenants would be given first option to buy before up to 75% of the properties were offered on the open market. For more detail and background, see *Breaking news* (17.9.13).

## Briefly

In Aug the Council's Finance & Budget Committee considered **lending £37,838,500** to Dunedin Canmore Enterprises Ltd and Port of Leith Housing Assoc/Persevere Developments, to help build **341 homes at Shrubhill**. A vote in favour was expected at the full Council meeting on 26.9.13.

The next meeting of the **Broughton History Society** is on 7 Oct in Drummond CHS at 7pm. **Richard Rodger** will talk with infectious enthusiasm about **'Dr Henry Littlejohn and "The Condition of Edinburgh": Public Health in the 19th Century'**.

**Several bikes have been pinched** from external cages and internal common stairs across **Claremont, Bellevue and Spey Terrace recently**. Owners are advised to fit **floor bolts** and to carefully monitor strangers seeking entry.

**Wikimedia contributors, enthusiasts and newbies** from across Edinburgh – including Broughton stalwart **Brian McNeil** – will hold a social from 1pm on Sun 27 Oct in the **Malt Shovel on Cockburn St**. All welcome.

A plaque which commemorates the raising of the Scottish standard in Morningside prior to the **Battle of Flodden** in 1513 was recently restored by the **Charles Laing & Sons** foundry on **Beaverbank Place**. It was then regilded by Paul McAuley of the **City Collections in Broughton Market**. Flodden – at which King James IV and between 10,000 and 20,000 of his troops died – is **Scotland's worst defeat**. No blame attaches to Morningside.

Welcome to **Jeremiah's Taproom** on Elm Row. With a new name, 'craft' beers, comfy armchairs and refreshed décor, the **revamped venue** offers a broad cross-section of locals an alternative to **exorbitant fleshpots** up the town. Not everyone's pleased, though. **One full-time misery and former patron** of the now toppled Elm Bar told *Spurtle*: 'If I'd wanted a maraschino yuppie in my pint I'd have asked for one.'

**Bi & Beyond Edinburgh** – a new group offering fortnightly social activities for **bisexual people** – launches from 7–9pm at the **Howe St LGBT Centre on 16 Oct**.

**Scottish Fire & Rescue Service** offer free home fire safety visits and a free smoke detector. Text 'fire' to 61611, Tel. 0800 0731 999, or visit [www.firescotland.gov.uk].

**New Town & Broughton Community Council (NTBCC)** welcomes recent amendments to the scheme for **1–5 Baxter's Place** (Ref. 13/03075/LBC). What's left of the **Salon Cinema** will go, the new hotel's scale has been reduced, and there is a **'secret garden'** to the rear. See *Breaking news* (28.11.12).

## Locals in the limelight

Broughton has enjoyed several 15 minutes of fame lately.

First, US comedian Greg Proops stayed here this summer, and our birds, bins and baubles inspired his final Fringe show at the Gilded Balloon. So did *Spurtle*, from whose Issue 221 Proops quoted extensively. Hear him here: [http://goo.gl/42gyRr].

Second, BBC1's 'The One Show' focused on the new pop-up food-and-drink scene in Broughton Street Lane. Summer visitors The Mussel Men hogged centre-stage, whilst the more permanent Lock up Coffee hissed and gurgled and tidied up meaningfully in the background.

Third, the Hairy Bikers' 2011 feature on Valvona & Crolla (part of their series 'Best of British') was re-shown. Dave Myers and Si King looked at Mediterranean cuisine in the UK, focusing on the UK's oldest delicatessen (established in 1934). A council insider notes that both have lost weight since their last visit.



## Middle of nowhere on Leith Walk



A new exhibition in McNaughtan's Bookshop until 9 November features photographs by Javier Ternero (above) and paintings by Charly Murray. It is based on their 2-week residency at Cill Rialaig, a retreat in the remote landscape of Ireland's Co. Kerry.

## Sign of the times



A note attached to the window of Russian Passion (5 Canonmills) explains recent inactivity there [http://goo.gl/gW1HWK].

'Dear Friends! Home Office UKBA has restricted us to run the Russian Passion café and asked to come back to Russia, we are very sorry that we cannot open the restaurant anymore and hugely enjoyed your visits and amazing feedback for this tiny Russian eatery! Thank you very much!'

The owner hopes to return and reopen in future.

## St James Quarter news ... hotel for Picardy Place

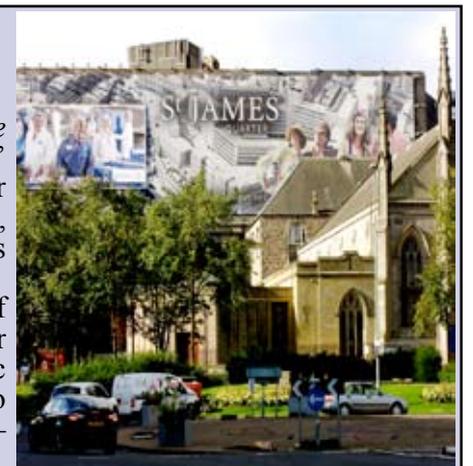
Back in June (Issue 219), *Spurtle* reported Henderson Global Investors' revised (and unlikely) date of 2015 for work to begin on the St James Quarter, and its plan to move the King James Hotel to Picardy Place.

HGI has now lodged a Proposal of Application to buy land here, and their agents GVA Ltd will hold a public preapplication notification meeting to unveil hotel plans on 9 October, 2.00–7.00pm, at Café Camino

How any development of Picardy Place will be coordinated with upgrading of Leith Walk and completion of tramwork infrastructure remains to be seen.

The Scottish Government pledged £3.6m for Leith Walk on 24 September, bringing the total budget up to £8.6m: [http://goo.gl/ikgxtB].

Council Transport Convener Lesley Hinds hailed the commitment, which will help 'prioritise pedestrians, cyclists and sustainable modes of transport as well as creating a vibrant and lively thoroughfare which will benefit local residents and businesses as well as those visiting the area'. (See Issues 218, 220.)



## Spine-tingling newcomer

At a time when so many second-hand, rare and antiquarian bookshops are closing or transferring online, Le Troubadour at 101 Henderson Row warms the heart.

Opened over the summer, it is the brainchild of Aeneas MacKay, a former weaver and organic farmer from the Isle of Mull with a lifelong love of literature.

The shop's niche market reflects his personal interests: natural history, exploration and travel, Central Asia and the Middle East (particularly Iran), Sir Richard Burton, art and culture, new books from the Octagon Press and stories for children from Hoopoe Books. MacKay currently stocks around 2,000 volumes.

To find out more, visit [<http://letroubadouredinburgh.com>], and keep an eye on *Spurtle's* online *Breaking news* where interesting plates and covers will feature in future months.



## Broughton banged to rights

The sex industry in Broughton has long roots.

In 1923, former cinema chain proprietor Asher Barnard set up the Bohemian – a nightclub in the disreputable Swinton Row between Elder St and Cathedral Lane. Renamed in 1928, the Kosmo Dance Club's 'spurious glamour' and well-connected clientele belied its sale of untaxed liquor and role as feeder to a network of brothels. Its activities were an open secret, but friends in high places and endemic police corruption protected it from prosecution.

In 1932, Sergeant (later Chief Constable) William Merrilees was ordered to bring the club to book. He moved slowly at first, pursuing minor shebeening offences and a seemingly 'unsuccessful' diversionary campaign against a satellite brothel in Hart Street. Meanwhile, he carefully surveilled his true target by night, sometimes disguised as a street-walker.

Barnard employed many innocent English girls as dance instructresses before shackling them with debts and bullying them into prostitution. One such – practically a prisoner – became Merrilees' s informer. Having tapped her inside knowledge of the operation, he raided the premises in July 1933 with 78 officers.

A 9-day trial followed. Barnard and 2 others were sentenced to 18 months for living off immoral earnings, and the Kosmo Club closed.

Merrilees was promoted to Inspector, briefly enjoying celebrity status here and in the US press. Familiar details appear in his memoir *The Short Arm of the Law* (1966), which a local constable confirms is popular among Edinburgh police officers to this day. I was directed to it by David Watt, who resides in Asher Barnard's former home at 21 Bellevue Place. *AM*



## A-listed litany of horrors

The continuing neglect of 1–3 Baxter's Place, just yards from the bright lights of the Playhouse and Theatre Royal bar, is of serious concern. The litany of horrors includes:

- 5 broken windows
- 14 boarded-up windows
- rampant buddleia growing up the façade
- a ghastly array of garbage including beer cans, bottles and hypodermic needles outside the sub-basement
- open cellarge overflowing with rubbish and home to rats
- paving choked with weeds and broken glass.

All this is fully accessible from the street. A homeless person begging outside is emblematic of the neglect and desuetude which have beset this building far too long.

A swanky hotel has been proposed for behind the scenes (see 'Briefly', p. 2.), but still the rubbish mounts. The Council seems blasé about this appalling state of affairs in a high-profile area which attracts thousands of visitors. Why? When will it finally act? *JRM*



## Briefly



**Five new 'cyclehoops'** – to which bikes may be secured – arrived on **Broughton St** last month. Attached to signposts on both **sides of the street**, they follow an appeal reported here in June (Issue 219).

**Maria's Kitchen** on Rodney St has been glowingly reviewed online. **Lunchquest Edinburgh** praised the 'very understated' café for its '**eye-catching prices**', '**incredibly warm and friendly welcome**', '**tasty food**' and reading material.

Meanwhile, nearby newsagent **Costcutters** has changed hands. **Keith Jeffries** offers the usual cigs and papers **plus** pet supplies, wrapping requisites, Christmas decorations, and (at 10p a sheet) this end of Broughton's **only known public photocopier**.

As part of its **adult education programme (2013–14)**, Drummond CHS offers the **Discovery Award**: like a Duke of Edinburgh Award but for the over-50s. Components are: **volunteering** a service; learning a new **skill/hobby**; **physical recreation**; and **undertaking** – a challenge or journey of discovery. Tel. 661 8544.

Waitrose's new **Good Food Guide 2014** lists 2 local spots among the UK's best. **The Kitchin** (Leith) ranks 21st with a 'cooking score' of 7/10; **Restaurant Martin Wishart** (Picardy Place) comes 26th, also with 7/10. **The Gardener's Cottage** (Royal Terrace Gdns) gets an honorable mention, 14 months after opening in 2012. Upmarket Waitrose emerged well from last year's **meat scandal** – besides beef, its burgers contained traces only of unicorn.

**Ballantrae Hotel Group** has appealed against Council refusal of planning consent for a 3-storey extension at **11–13 York Lane** (*Breaking news*, 16.4.13).

Permission has been granted for a large windowless hut occupying much of the garden behind **65 E. Claremont St** (Issue 218). NTBCC describes the scheme as showing '**a worrying cavalier approach**' towards the New Town Conservation Area.

New Town residents have rallied to defend a '**magnificent**' lime on Northumberland St Lane NW. They say building nearby may kill it, and claim architectural drawings misrepresent the **120-year-old tree's size** (*Breaking news*, 16.9.13).

## Moreover ...



As predicted, style-beacon **Moleta Munro** has moved into 43-6 London St, opening officially on 12 Sept. A **cool light interior** affords great views of the cold exterior.

A **Mental Health Community Information Event** will run at 121 Montgomery St (corner of Easter Rd) on Tues 8 Oct, 1-4pm: [laetitia@advocard.org.uk].

**Leith Central Community Council's next meeting** has been rescheduled to 21 Oct at 7pm in McDonald Rd Library.

E. Claremont St's **Tankard Guest House** – almost unchanged for over 30 years – closed in Sept. **Recent guests** went online to express their disappointment. The owner plans to **convert the property into 2 flats**.

**The Leith Funding Panel** has £5,813 to allocate on 18 Nov. For a community grant of up to £3,000, **submit applications by 18 Oct**. Contact [http://goo.gl/oLy7rN].

Residents have secured a **tree protection order** for 5 Norwegian maples on vacant land abutting flats at **113-17 Bellevue Rd**.

**British Summer Time ends** when clocks fall back 1 hour at 2am on Sun 27 Oct.

The **National Galleries of Scotland** confirm work progresses on a planning application to reinstall 4 of **Antony Gormley's 6 Times figures** to the Water of Leith (*Breaking news*, 19.9.13). **Amended tilting mechanisms** are being designed. NGS operate on British Geological Time, and no schedule is yet available.

**John Knight** has stepped down after 13 years as NTBCC's Planning Convener. Committee members offered sincere thanks and a bottle **to forget them by**.

Broughton St Mary's Parish Church in **Bellevue Crescent** is holding a **Coffee Morning** on Saturday 26 October between 10.30 and 12 noon, while their **Christmas Fair** will be held on Saturday 23 November from 11-2pm.

**Spurtle Team:** F.Booth, J. Dickie, T. Griffen, M. Hart, J. MacDonald, A. McIntosh, J. R. Maclean, T. Smith, D. Sterratt, E. Taylor-Smith. Post: Spurtle, c/o Narcissus Flowers, 87 Broughton St, Edinburgh EH1 3RJ.

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Leith Library, Ferry Road: 10am.  
Royston Wardieburn Community Centre, Pilton Drive North: 12 noon.

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Surgeries:  
Every Monday 5pm: Constituency Office  
2nd Monday of the month:  
11am-12noon St Bride's Centre  
1pm-2pm Stockbridge Library

NB. No Surgeries on Public Holidays.

Email: marco.biagi.msp@scottish.parliament.uk



**Alison Johnstone**  
MSP for Lothian Region



On the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month during term time I hold a surgery for Lothian residents at the Scottish Parliament between 11am and 1pm.

Please call to book a surgery appointment or to arrange another time and venue that is convenient for you.

Contact me on 0131 348 6421  
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## Broughton

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**Friday advice sessions:**  
4.00pm **Stockbridge Library**,  
no appointment necessary;  
5.00pm **5 Croall Place**;  
other surgeries throughout the constituency – phone for details

## New Town/Broughton Community Council

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

Next Meetings:

**Monday 7 Oct.**

at 7.30pm

Broughton St Mary's Parish Church, Bellevue Crescent

**& 4 Nov. (Venue TBC)**

secretary@ntbcc.org.uk

## AMDECORATING

Your local painter & decorator **Alastair McAlpine**  
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