

Spurtle

BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER

No 147 broughton.spurtle@blueyonder.co.uk Free

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Tel: - 668 3701

Briefly

The tang of sea air comes to Broughton on Monday, 14th May as **Broughton History Society** presents a talk on 'The Shetland Bus: the story of the clandestine link between Shetland and Norway during WW2'. The 'bus' were fishing boats, pretending to be Norwegian fishermen, but secretly supplying the Norwegian resistance against the Nazis. A fascinating talk, to be sure! Don your sou'westers and sail into the wind to Drummond Community High School at 7:30 pm.

Some less-than-beautiful faces at **Salon La** on Broughton Street, who have been ordered to tear up wooden decking in their basement. The decking, which was added to give a little colour to the building, was called "alien" by council officials. Lynne McTaggart, the boss at Salon La, is understandably upset at having to tear up £2000-worth of work. The site was a former bric-a-brac shop with scrap metal littering the place, and McTaggart thought the decking a great improvement. The council must be obeyed, however, and up the decking must come.

Broughton High School were in fine voice recently as they joined with other schools (and, improbably, an Eagles tribute group) to raise money for Malawian mothers by holding a concert in the Usher Hall. The concert, held on Friday, 20th April, ranged from jazz to ceilidh via poetry and Japanese drumming. Well done to all involved! The funds raised will be heading for Lilongwe's Bottom Hospital, and will hopefully lower its unenviably high rate of infant and mother mortality.

Hustings Double Bill



City Council hustings

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

Around 90 people turned up at Broughton St Mary's Church on 11th April to meet our Scottish Parliament candidates.

Each of the eight candidates on the platform had two minutes to introduce themselves before questions from the floor. Questions on the renewal of Trident, and on what candidates would like to see done to tackle social inequality in Scotland, were followed by an edgy discussion about different methods of local taxation. Then came questions about care for the elderly, and what each candidate would try to do for the Arts.

So what's the likely outcome on election day? The LibDem candidate is keen to convince us that he's the only real alternative to a Labour constituency MSP: he says 'last time' he had 29% of the vote to Labour's 34%, with none of the other parties in serious contention. But the 'last time' he's talking about is the Westminster election of 2005. People don't necessarily vote the same way for the Scottish Parliament: in 2003 the SNP came second in Edinburgh North and Leith, with the LibDems in fourth place.

CITY COUNCIL

The 65 people who came to our second hustings on 16th April had to get to grips with new, multi-councillor wards, with Broughton split between two of them: we invited the Leith Walk candidates to our hustings; the Community Council will be holding one for City Centre as we go to press.

After self-introductions, the seven candidates on the platform fielded questions on what to do about beggars on our streets; an ethical investments policy for our city; opening hours for pubs, etc. as they affect the cosmopolitanism of Edinburgh; how to improve local employment opportunities; and the pros and cons of trams. Candidates were asked what 'reward' they'd like to give to the Broughton community if elected: the point being that not all progress is down to councillors' work, much is achieved by local effort.

The likely outcome of the election? Unpredictable!

Spurtle doesn't comment editorially on individual candidates. But there are some independent personal impressions from local residents inside.

Scottish Parliament Candidates

We invited reader Joe Patrizio of Albany Street to come to the hustings and then give his personal impressions of the candidates for Edinburgh North and Leith.



Jamie Allison (Solidarity) looked forward to a socialist and equal society. The number of billionaires had more than doubled in the last few years but poverty had not been eliminated. To counteract this, Solidarity wanted a Trade Union Freedom bill which would help wages rise. Another candidate against the Council Tax, he supported a local income tax replacement. As with most of the other candidates, he was against Trident, and spoke well on the subject.



Mark Ballard (Scottish Greens) saw social change as a tool for protecting the environment. Tackling poverty would help the environment, as would changing transport habits. Local shops needed more support, and investment in social housing was a priority. There should be more community involvement in spending monies allocated. The tax and benefits system needed sorting out, as there were too many disincentives to work. Big landowners should pay a proportionate amount of tax, which they don't at present. Against Trident: the Greens have proposed making the transport of nuclear warheads illegal.



Malcolm Chisholm (Labour) has represented the area as MP and MSP for some time now. While setting out his 'rebel' credentials and speaking against Trident, he defended the Executive's record on education, social equality, job creation and poverty reduction. Unlike most of the others, he wouldn't scrap Council Tax and was sceptical about the rate of local income tax proposed by other parties.



Mike Crockart (LibDems) claimed positive results for his party as a member of the Executive coalition. Pushed the party's policy on replacing Council Tax with a local income tax. Called for lower class sizes, more police and control of health resources at a local level. Thought that the UK should keep Trident but only so that we could give it away, later.



David Hutchison (SNP) had independence as his main theme (of course) and looked forward to Scotland having a full voice internationally. He was also another one who would scrap Council Tax in favour of a local income tax, and claimed that the SNP numbers for this added up (which was not universally accepted). On health, he wanted everyone to have an 'MoT at 40, and wanted the removal of prescription charges.



Margo MacDonald (Independent) is always worth listening to, even when you don't agree with her (which, personally, isn't often). Being an independent, she had no party line to hold and quite happily agreed with any of the parties when she thought they were talking sense, and was quite clear when she thought they weren't. By working this way in Parliament, she claimed some success in influencing policy. Although against Trident, she pointed out that Westminster would override any decisions on it made by the Scottish Parliament.



Steven Nimmo (SSP) started by saying that the election was an opportunity to hold MSPs to account (looking to his right, where the three previous MSPs sat). He proposed scrapping prescription charges, providing free school meals for all children and replacing the Council Tax with a Scottish Service Tax (although I wasn't clear what the difference was). A Carers' Allowance would recognize that caring was a full-time occupation for some. All this would be paid for by taxing the rich but, interestingly, at a level no higher than Thatcher taxed them. Oh, and the SSP were blazing a trail on climate change (nobody laughed, but Mark Ballard looked a bit surprised).



Iain Whyte (Scottish Conservatives) talked about businesses more than the others (to be expected, I suppose) and proposed removing 120,000 small businesses from the tax regime. Against a local income tax, claiming it would damage businesses, the Tories would help pensioners by halving their Council Tax. In common with most of the other candidates, he was in favour of a more local approach to health services. He felt that safety of the nation depended on Trident, but stated that it was not an issue for this election.

City Council Candidates

We invited reader Chris Richardson of Barony Street to give his personal impressions of candidates for the Leith Walk Ward.



Angela Blacklock (Scottish Labour Party) appeared to have not understood the concept of hustings. Whilst she started well, portraying herself as the candidate for women and families, she faded fast. She didn't seem to have any policies of her own; it was more a presentation of the current Labour-led council's achievements over the last few years. Worse still, she seemed unwilling to offer an opinion on many of the valid issues raised through questions, and when she did respond, she tended to do nothing more than agree with her more eloquent and experienced Labour colleague. Honestly not sure if she is a serious candidate or just having a dummy run for four years' time.



Deidre Brock (Scottish National Party) didn't have a great night in my opinion. Whilst I am sure she will probably get elected on the current wave of nationalist support, her policies were nothing more than a regurgitation of the party's national manifesto, which was disappointing at a local council hustings. Her night was made worse by effectively being run over by the party's policy on Trams, and particularly on whether the money saved if the SNP cancelled the Trams and Airport rail link projects would be ring-fenced to Edinburgh-based transport projects.



Adrian Cannon (Solidarity - Tommy Sheridan) was a nervous candidate, but as the event progressed his nerves gave way to some very well-made, if somewhat brief, points. His policies were what you would expect from a Solidarity candidate (free transport, 30,000 more council houses), but as an individual, it was clear that Adrian had direct experience of life on the streets and on a low income, and that he would be a strong advocate for these often under-represented and marginalised groups. He also had some very sensible opinions on several other issues, particularly with regard to ethical pension investments. Probably just outside my personal top four.



Maggie Chapman (Scottish Green Party) believes that communities are at the heart of a city's development and that the area would benefit by putting local people and their communities first. She was clearly an advocate of inclusive government, and whilst she showed a level of naivety on certain issues (homelessness and begging), she also exhibited a clear appreciation of other concerns (licensing and open spaces). All in all a good candidate who could make a fine representative of the local community and would certainly have something to contribute to the city as a whole.



Trevor Davies (Scottish Labour Party) was by far the best candidate on the night. He is clearly an experienced local politician, and as the current councillor for the Broughton ward has achieved a great deal for the area. His previous experience has given him an excellent understanding of the vast range of issues that a local councillor needs to grasp, and whilst you might not agree with his personal interpretation, you cannot fault his sincerity and integrity. He also made an entertaining defence of the Trams project. Would be a loss to the ward if he wasn't elected as one of its four representatives, if for no other reason than the other three future councillors could learn a lot from him.



Louise Lang (Scottish Liberal Democrats) admitted that she was lacking in experience, but she saw this as an opportunity for a 'new broom' to be elected. Her community credentials were strong and she was convincing and sincere in her aims to improve the lives of local residents, particularly with regard to safety, cleaner streets and communication. A local candidate for local people who I believe would listen to the community and try her best to meet their needs.



Iain McGill (Scottish Conservative and Unionist) presented himself as the 'local boy done good'. Despite his impressive community-based CV he was disappointingly light on policy. He appeared more reactive than proactive, but he did exhibit a good understanding of some of the realities of the future council format and was one of the few candidates who I could imagine working for consensus with his fellow councillors to represent the ward.

Belle's View



Hi fans

The May Queen has danced on Calton Hill, so spring has definitely sprung and the grass has riz (and brought on my hay fever!). So what's for fun in groovy and happening Broughton?

Skulls a go-go! **The Hallion at Picardy Place** is to re-launch itself after a £250K refurbishment as the "relaxed and defiantly unstuffy" **Home House**, with a Hollywood-style opening planned for a bevy of glittering celebs such as **myself**, **Estelle Murgatroyd**, **JK Rowling** and **Vivienne Westwood**. Membership of "*like minded people blessed with a discerning eye, a sociable mien and a penchant for pleasure*" will keep out the riff-raff!

Did you see our very own **Mansfield Church, Elm Row**, and other choice bits of **Broughton** in TV play **Wedding Belles** on BBC 1 recently? **Irvine Welsh's** Edinburgh play follows the lives of four women with drug habits, with the main character played by **Edinburgh-born actress Shauna Macdonald**, star of BBC's **Spooks** and horror thriller **The Descent**. **Welsh** is of course, famous for the cultural phenomenon of novel **Trainspotting** – does anyone remember him reading pre-publication excerpts from it at the **Stafford Centre** in 1993? Another first for **Broughton!**

Pining for **Pamplona**, or aching for **Ali-cante**? Look no further my chicas and chicos, because **Sala Café Bar** has reopened in the **LGBT Centre** in **Broughton Street** as a tapas and cava bar (www.salacafe.co.uk). With pinchos (small tapas) being offered with every alcoholic drink, it's a little bit Spanish sunshine right on our doorstep – *salud!*

Till next time!
PERSEPHONE BELLE

Spurtle is about your life in Broughton.

We aim to inform on local affairs; raise local issues; publicise the work of local action groups; make connections between the news and people's own lives in Broughton; and stir things up a bit! We'll support people looking for a fair deal, but not protect privilege. We're not connected to any political group or party. And we don't get a grant from anybody to finance the paper.

Editor: Edmund O'Connor
Tel: 0131 668 3701/07985 213435
Email: broughton.spurtle@blueyonder.co.uk
Postal address: GFL, 12 Dalkeith Road, Edinburgh EH16 5BP
Any correspondence can also be left at Narcissus, 87 Broughton Street.

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Constituency Office:
86-88 Brunswick Street, EH7 5HU
Tel: 0131 557 0577
Fax: 0131 557 5759
mark@marklazarowicz.org.uk
www.marklazarowicz.org.uk
Friday advice sessions:
4.00pm Stockbridge Library
5.30pm Constituency office



New Town/Broughton Community Council

Vacancies for Community Councillors

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

The next meeting on Monday 14th May, 7.30pm at Drummond Community High School.

Secretary: Pat Eccles 225 4633
E-mail: pat.eccles62@wanadoo.co.uk

Contacts

Bellevue and Claremont Residents Association

Yvonne Pryor 466 1144

Broughton Road Group

Pat Eccles 225 4633

Broughton Village Association

Sarah Macauley 557 2724

Friends of Hopetoun Crescent Garden

Mitchell Manson 557 1933

Gayfield Association

William McNair 556 4493

Hopetoun Village Owners

hopetounvillage@hotmail.com

Redbraes Residents Association

George Hosey 467 6151

Powderhall Owners Association

info@powderhallvillage.co.uk

New Town/Broughton Community Council

Pat Eccles 225 4633

Broughton History Society

Patrick Tyler 556 5036

Drummond High School

556 2651

Clr Trevor Davies

Broughton Ward 529 3221

Surgery at Broughton Primary School
Weds, 6.30pm-7pm, Term-time only.

Clr David Guest

New Town Ward 558 8823 or
529 4268. Surgery at 67
Northumberland Street, Mondays,
6.30pm to 7.15pm

Sovereign Court Residents

<http://www.sovcourt.co.uk>
sovcourt@yahoo.co.uk

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