

# Spurtle

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**BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free**

**December  
2010**

**No 177**

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## TRAVEL AT A CROSSROADS

Patrick Hutton, Transport Convener for the New Town/Broughton Community Council, has been assessing traffic regulation orders (TROs) as far away as Lothian Rd and Randolph Crescent. Closer to Broughton, he seeks clarification on:

- Position of traffic lights and cycle lanes
- Whether trams will obey traffic lights or vice versa
- Interim plans for (imminent) closures and diversions at Picardy Place during final utility diversions and track laying
- What promises to be very slow moving traffic around the planned Picardy Place 'circulatory'
- An apparent westbound bus lane on York Place blocking traffic leaving Picardy Place.

In TIE-related discussions, 3 concerns recur: (1) How trams will be prioritised over fellow travellers, including pedestrians; (2) Whether TIE has sufficiently considered the effect of such prioritisation on nearby streets; (3) How presentation of TROs in 3 stages means decisions are being made piecemeal, with no information on the consequences.

'At the moment, the available information is only about the tram route itself,' says Hutton. 'NTBCC needs to see an integrated plan estimating the effects on all traffic in adjoining areas. We don't know what the final plans are for permanent diversions, and we don't even have a timetable to see these plans. Without all this information it is going to be very hard for NTBCC to take a balanced view on the present TROs.'

Outwith NTBCC, some suspect the full implications of trams are simply incalculable. Perhaps we can only brace ourselves for more chaos until the system settles down and fewer people choose to cross Edinburgh by car. [See online 'Extras'.]

## CHAMBERS IN EXILE?

The decision by Paris-based Hachette to relocate their Chambers Harrap office from Hopetoun Crescent to London has provoked widespread dismay in 'the airts'.

The world-renowned and much-loved dictionary has been compiled by the dedicated staff for many years in our area, and the name of Chambers remains one of Edinburgh and Scotland's proudest publishing institutions.

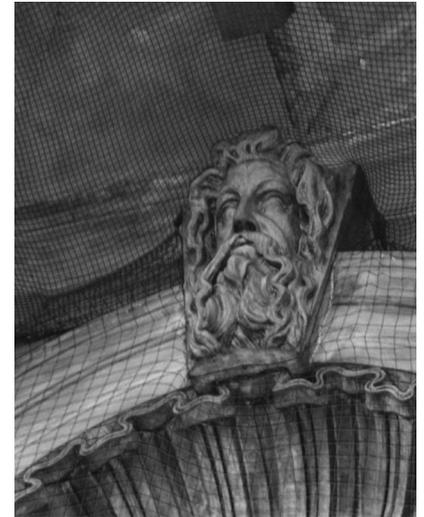


William Chambers (in Chambers St) with the 'Broughton Boy'.

The campaign to prevent the firm's demise in Edinburgh has now gathered widespread support from politicians of all colours, distinguished writers and the general public. *Spurtle* strongly supports the campaign.

For background and the latest developments, readers are directed to: [[www.publishing-scotland.co.uk](http://www.publishing-scotland.co.uk)]. (See page 3.)

## MEET THE GEORGES



In September 2008 (Issue 162) we featured the remarkable carved keystone at 19 Gayfield Place. Four similar examples have recently been noticed at 66 George St (pictured), the George Hotel, and St Andrew's and St George's Church. Can readers think of any others?

## DRUMMOND STILL SAFE

On 27 Oct. the *Evening News* reported that City of Edinburgh Council might close Drummond CHS to help realise £90m savings over 3 years. *Spurtle* understands from well-placed sources that this is not true.

A draft report by CEC Children and Families officials included a range of measures to save money. Among these was closing 2 secondary schools. However, these suggestions were theoretical not political solutions, and the Committee itself is opposed to closing City secondaries. Cllr David Beckett, Vice Convener, Education, Children and Families Committee told *Spurtle*: 'Officials can recommend all they like, but it's for politicians to decide. Closure is not going to happen.'

The *Evening News* story (partially repeated on 19 Nov.) asserted that budget savings would 'revive the fears of parents' at 3 schools threatened with closure in 2007. However, if any fears were truly revived, it was probably through that paper's alarmist journalism. Parent Council Chair Lynda Flex commented: 'We deal in fact not fiction at Drummond. It was mischievous and not helpful of the *News* to dredge up an old story on a quiet Tuesday.' [More on Drummond inside.]

## Briefly

Police have charged 2 males in Leith with theft of **brass door kickplates**. They denied involvement in similar thefts in the New Town (Issues 174–5) where, **coincidentally**, no further kickplates have been reported stolen since.

**Royal Mail** is offering **festive extras**: more deliveries in the evenings and on Sun. 20 Dec.; later opening hours at enquiry offices from 14 Dec.; free redelivery to certain PO branches or home/ neighbour ([www.royalmail.com/redelivery](http://www.royalmail.com/redelivery)); and even smilier, cheerier, more contented staff.

On 15 Nov. enterprising **Broughton PS pupils** raised £502 by packing bags at Tesco on Broughton Rd. Money will go to the school Eco-Committee for playground improvements such as plants, shrubs and trees to attract wildlife, additional compost bins and garden tools etc.

Paintings once owned by local **Sir Compton Mackenzie** (see p. 3), including some by his neighbours **Anne Redpath** and **Sir William McTaggart**, went on sale at Bonhams in Queen St on 4 Dec. See [[www.bonhams.com](http://www.bonhams.com)].

**Broughton History Society's festive soirée** will be in Drummond CHS at 7.30pm on Mon. 7 Dec.

Claremont and Bellevue have had a spate of attacks on **car windows and windscreens**. Crime-smashing Community PC Simon Daley seeks witnesses and information [[simon.daley@lbp.pnn.police.uk](mailto:simon.daley@lbp.pnn.police.uk)].

**Spurtle's joy-filled AGM** will be in Broughton St Mary's Parish Church at 7pm on 9 Dec. **Bring your own humbugs**.

Broughton PS's **Christmas Concert** will start at 10am on Fri. 18 Dec. Parents, carers, and friends of the school are welcome.

Professor Michael Tooley (hoe, hoe, hoe) will talk on the work of **Gertrude Jekyll**, 'artist, gardener, craftswoman' on 10 Dec. at 7.30pm in the Botanic Gardens: £5 or £3 for **Garden History Society** members.

Thursday eves 7–8.30pm, **safe, fun, challenging activities in King George V Park** for locals aged 12+. Tel. 332 6316 (Callum McLeod) for more information.

CEC's bid to secure £600K of government **town centre regeneration funds** failed on 15 Nov. Tramwork-affected businesses on **Leith Walk** would have been among those to benefit. **Malcolm Chisholm, MSP** was reportedly appalled. Critics claim the SNP is focusing awards on key election targets in the east of the city.

Long-term improvements outside Broughton PS are now part of a **larger traffic safety review for the whole of McDonald Rd**. Review, design and planning may take until June. Actual changes aren't expected until Leith Walk tramworks end.

Staff and pupils **finish for Christmas on Tue. 22 Dec**. Resume on 6 Jan.

## Weir in the money?

Community Energy Scotland (an independent charity) is funding a feasibility study for micro hydro electricity generation on the Water of Leith. Four sites are considered, one of which is the weir below Redbraes.

CEC's 'Micro Hydro Technical Feasibility Study' in 2005 concluded that a Redbraes reverse Archimedes screw could generate 23kW of electricity which could be sold and fed to the National Grid via adjacent housing. But at that time, it was not thought that the scheme would make a profit.

The new study will revisit the issues in light of technological and market developments. Under review are: financial viability; installation, maintenance, insurance costs; and environmental/flooding implications. If the scheme should prove viable, Greener Leith – one of the partners which secured funding for the research – hopes a community-managed organisation could reinvest any modest sums earned in reducing locals' carbon footprints.

The study will begin in December, and is expected to finish by April 2010, although this will depend on the speed of response by third-party consultees such as the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, Scottish Natural Heritage, utility firms and CEC.

Redbraes is the smallest of the schemes under consideration. The other 3 are at Harperrig and Harelaw Reservoirs, and Dean Village. Advantages of local micro hydro generation schemes include: displacement of CO2 and other greenhouse gases; minimal loss over transmission distance; highest output in winter when prices and demand are highest; capacity and reliability. Disadvantages can include cumulative environmental impact (e.g. on movement of fish, disruption to banks). Some consider their symbolic and educational value more significant than their practical worth.

Some 76 mills operated on the river in the 18th century, and a turbine was still powered by the weir at Redbraes in the 1980s.

For further information see: [[www.communityenergyscotland.org.uk](http://www.communityenergyscotland.org.uk)]; [[www.greenerleith.org](http://www.greenerleith.org)]; [[www.sepa.org.uk](http://www.sepa.org.uk)].

## Inspection 'positive', says Reid

*Drummond CHS was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectorate in October. Headteacher Jon Reid reports.* Overall, it was a very positive experience and the inspectors were impressed with the pupils, parents and community members they met. We actually quite enjoyed the process, and because we know our school well and the inspectors are confident we know how to improve, they won't be returning – superb!

They said our particular strengths were: the headteacher's vision and leadership; high-quality leadership by many staff encouraging improvements in morale, relationships, and learning and teaching; young people's enthusiasm in discussions and collaborative work; a strong sense of cultural diversity and community, with friendly relationships between young people and with staff.

They validated our suggested examples of good practice: strategic planning for Curriculum for Excellence; specialist support for speech and language therapy and English as an additional language; promotion of health and wellbeing.

We agreed areas for improvement: provision of PE (we don't hit the Government target of 2 hours per pupil per week, but had already planned for 150 mins from next Aug.), religious and moral education and religious observance; increasing the impact of self-evaluation through greater consistency and rigour.

All in all, when the report becomes publicly available, it will be seen as a very positive story. We're pleased with the result, which will help Drummond move to the next level and continue our journey of continuous improvement.

## Reaching out for green fingers

The LGBT Centre for Health and Wellbeing at 9 Howe Street has begun creating a garden for people who don't have one of their own.

They're looking for volunteers from the LGBT community to join in every other week at designing, building and maintaining the garden. Guest speakers will offer expert advice. The plan is for participants to learn new gardening skills, grow their own vegetables, support wildlife and have fun. No previous experience is necessary, and all tools and equipment are provided. (Next dates are Sats 5 and 19 Dec., 10.30am–1pm.)

The purpose of recently relaunched LGBT Health is to promote the health and wellbeing of Edinburgh's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. The Centre very nearly shut down after 5 years of funding, but reopened in October 2008 and has been providing a diverse programme of courses, workshops and events since. James Brandon, Project Administrator, said, 'By opening an LGBT Community Garden we hope to offer a safe space where individuals can come down and grow their own fruit and vegetables. We also hope that it roots us within Edinburgh's community.'

For more information contact Laura at [[laura@lgbthealth.org.uk](mailto:laura@lgbthealth.org.uk)]; Tel. 523 1100; or visit [[www.lgbthealth.org.uk](http://www.lgbthealth.org.uk)].

## Profile: At home with Monty

Sir Edward Montague Compton Mackenzie ('Monty'), celebrated author, sometime actor, master-spy, founder of the Gramophone Magazine, Scottish Nationalist, inter alia, came to 31 Drummond Place in 1953 where he resided until his death, aged 89, in 1972.



COMPTON MACKENZIE, Author

Here, in old age, he wrote no fewer than 28 books, including the monumental *My Life and Times* in 10 volumes 'or octaves'. During this time, after the death of his first wife Faith (1960), he married his beloved housekeeper Chrissie McSween from Barra, and after her sad death (1963) pledged himself to Chrissie's sister Lillian, the third Lady Mackenzie.

Both sisters are still fondly remembered locally. A neighbour, Joanna Girling, was entranced by the hens roaming Monty's garden, when invited to tea as a little girl. Undoubtedly, Chrissie from Barra introduced the poultry to Drummond Place. Many ladies frequented Lady Lillian's hairdressers salon in the basement of No. 31, happily provided by Monty for the purpose. Another neighbour, Gaby Holden, vividly recalls Chrissie's concern when a fledgling bird had fallen from a nest outside Gaby's top-floor in Scotland St into the garden – an event keenly noted by several Siamese cats (Sir Compton was President of the UK Siamese Cat Association for many years).

Here at No. 31, Monty stayed in bed to midday, wrote all those mellow, later books, entertained a galaxy of visitors and friends including Evelyn Waugh, Eric Linklater, Prince Charles, Hugh MacDiarmid et al., smoked his 'sublime tobacco', and of an evening in December we may suppose sat by the fire, reached for a good malt, and with Sibelius on the gramophone, floated with the swan of Tuonela back and back to his birth in 1883, when a Queen-Empress sat on the throne. Perhaps, outside, a fine wind thrummed in the trees in the Drummond Garden. The author of the *Four Winds of Love* and *The Wind of Freedom* would have surely rejoiced, and slept well, in anticipation of pen and ink and the next page – strictly after midday. *JRM* [See also 'Briefly'.]

## Chambers of Broughton

The founders of the renowned publishing firm, William and Robert Chambers, originally from Peebles, had a close association with Broughton in the early 19th century.

William's first employment in 1814 was as an apprentice bookseller to Mr Sutherland on Calton St, and Robert worked initially for a Pilrig Russian merchant before setting up a 1-room bookshop on Leith Walk opposite today's Pilrig St in 1818. Both brothers sometimes slept in the shop until William opened his own business nearby. William later ran a stationer and printers business at 23 Broughton St (now Egg next to Mathers bar) from 1819 onwards. By the early 1830s it had moved to No. 47 (now the Union Gallery at the intersection of Forth St) as bookseller and circulating library.

Meanwhile, Robert, the more scholarly of the brothers, published his delightful, opinionated *Walks in Edinburgh* in 1828. This included a description of how Broughton had been transformed in the early 19th century:

*This drowsy, awkward little village has been surrounded and impaired by troops of handsome new houses, which seem to threaten it with speedy destruction. The contrast between its low, tile-roofed cottages, narrow, unpaved tortuous streets, and generally mean appearance, and the regular and beautiful modern streets amidst which it is placed, may afford matter of merriment to the visitor. Yet it is not many years since the citizens of Edinburgh used to send their wives and children to lodge in these miserable*

## Stay warmer together

Temperatures plummeting? Bills soaring? The environmental charity Changeworks has launched the Edinburgh Stair Project aimed at improving energy efficiency in private and communal areas of buildings.

They're looking for residents who want guidance in 'scoping, choosing and installing individual and collective energy saving measures in tenements and flats'. They'll help find grants and subsidised rates, and provide support throughout any works. Measures might include loft, cavity wall and tank/pipe insulation, and draught proofing of doors.

Everyone is entitled to subsidised improvements, and some people can get the work done free. For more information contact: 538 7957 or [rhamilton@changeworks.org.uk].

## Newhailes House

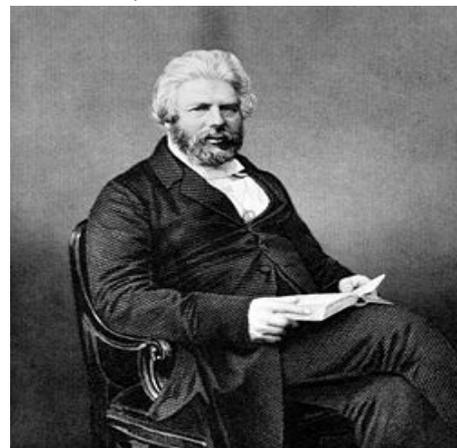
On what may prove my last Sunday outing of the year, the leaves stitched with frost, I dismount to look more closely at the ruins of a grotto designed 'to evoke reflection on the cycle of life and death'; then retaining what optimism I can, complete my circuit of the house, past trees lined like gnarled retainers awaiting a last summons. Where a month ago there had been at least a gleam, the windows are shuttered; just the setting for some forgotten Firs to go shuffling along endless corridors or beat, hopeless, on locked doors. The air chill, I pedal furiously away.

Stewart Conn

*We are privileged to print this seasonal poem, specially contributed by Scotland's distinguished poet, Edinburgh makar and man of letters, who lives locally and is a Spurtle supporter.*

*hovels during the summer months, for the benefit of their health – themselves, perhaps, continuing to occupy their houses in town during the week, while attending business, and visiting their families here upon a Saturday night or Sunday morning, in order to spend the day of rest in domestic happiness.*

*Broughton could then boast of a sort of rural seclusion, for so little communication was there between the village and the city, that an old blacksmith, who lived all his life*



*by the way-side, and died a few years ago at the age of eighty, remembered having sometimes observed only three individuals pass his smithy in the course of a whole day.*

(With thanks to John Dickie.)

Left: Robert Chambers

*Spurtle* wishes all readers a *Wesolych Swiat Bozego Narodzenia* and *naya sal mubarik hu* (a blythe Christmas and guid New Year). We return in Jan. 2010.

## Briefly

L'Escargot Bleu's recently launched **épicerie** at 56a Broughton St is holding a **wine tasting event** on 17 Dec. from 4.30pm. Regular wine tastings are one of the many enticements in this most delectable of Broughton's cornucopia where ***l'Entente est vraiment Cordiale.***

**Third Tuesday Concert** on 15 Dec: seasonal music for organ and voices at St Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral, 8pm, free.

A new plan for **4 Dublin St Lane (North)** proposes extending the existing 1-storey flat-roofed section of a building to make a 2-storey, pitched roof dwelling suitable for anyone **relishing the undivided attention of 50-60 close neighbours.** Changes to doors and windows will be 'in keeping with the conservation area', which includes what remains of the original Broughton village (see page 3). See detailed drawings for Ref. 09/02778/FUL at: [www.edinburgh.gov.uk/planning].

NTBCC has concerns about plans to convert 11-13 York Lane into an ancillary function room for the Ballantrae Hotel on Albany St (Ref. 09/02572/FUL). **Happy noises may disturb locals.**

How many UK streets can boast of their very own sausage? **Three stirring cheers** for the '**Broughton Banger**', Crombies' latest link to Sausage Heaven. So, what's next Mr Crombie - surely the real McCoy for herbivores? How about the 'Chicory, Artichoke au gratin Charmer', aka the '**Spicy Special Spurtle**'?

**Broughton St Mary's Parish Church Christmas schedule:** Nativity Sunday (all age worship and nativity play, 10.30am, 20 Dec.); Extravaganza for the young at heart (6.30pm, 24 Dec.); Watchnight Service (mince pies/carols 11pm+, 11.30pm, 24 Dec.); Family Communion (bring a present to show the congregation, 10.30am, Christmas Day).

**PS:** For this month, **Persephone Belle**, in full glory, extends a **special welcome** to all her many fans in 'Extras' at [www.broughtonspurtle.org.uk]

### Edinburgh budget crisis ...



Not the season to be jolly

### Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Lothians

Merry Xmas & Best Wishes for 2010



Surgery Times:  
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42 Hamilton Place  
5.00pm Ainslie Park Leisure Centre  
6.00pm Constituency Office

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## New Town/Broughton Community Council

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

**Next meeting on:**  
7 Dec. at 7.30pm  
Drummond Community High School

**mowats@blueyonder.co.uk**

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