

Spurtle



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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

THE INS AND OUTS OF St JAMES SQUARE

Since at least Apr this year, vehicle access to St James Sq has been possible via a manually operated barrier. This despite the Transport & Environment Cmte voting in Aug 2024 against allowing staff-operated bollards here in order to prioritise a pedestrian-only space for 'gathering and performance' (Issue 343).



When *Spurtle* asked on-site staff (not the individual shown here) who was allowed in, we were told 'only people visiting the hotel'. We asked how to distinguish the latter from those accessing shops and restaurants. 'You can just tell,' we were told.

In mid-May, *Spurtle* asked Edinburgh Council about the current state of affairs. A spokesperson replied 3 months later: 'This is a temporary arrangement, and the Council is working with the owner

of the St James Centre to bring forward a permanent solution for the management of the square.'

We have since asked the Council who has authorised the temporary arrangement, for how long and to what end; and whether T&E members have been informed. We await an answer.

For background to this story and Nuveen's reasons for wanting VIP vehicle access, see [bit.ly/ootsins].

ELM ROW VANISHING ... PUDDIE ANNOYING



Another of sculptor Shona Kinloch's *A Leith Walk* pigeons has been untimely plucked from Elm Row. This is the fourth birdnapping since the 8 component pieces returned in July 2023 (Issues 332, 351). Two have been recovered. Responses to the latest theft range from disappointment to frustration to @bookish_cats_aye's incandescent 'Gie us back oor doos, ye thieving faitherless hustlers!' The unauthorised removals are probably booze-fuelled idiocies, but with damaged pieces costing the Council significant sums to repair or replace, the pranks come at a cost to the public. Some want dedicated 24/7 CCTV here to deter future wrongdoers.

COLLISION ON DUBLIN STREET – CYCLIST INJURED

There was a collision between a car and a bicycle at the junction of Albany and Dublin St in the early evening of 12 Aug. The cyclist was taken to hospital.

The news brought swift reaction from locals and lobbyists, all of whom agreed the junction is in urgent need of improvement.

Blackford Safe Routes, for example, called for a low-traffic neighbourhood to be effected here, and said this part of a rat-run through residential areas needed a simple, low-cost and effective modal filter.

We will not speculate on the causes of Aug's collision but note that traffic priorities have changed twice at this junction in recent years. Traffic travelling up and down Dublin St now (again) has right of way, which is counter-intuitive to some drivers travelling along broad, level streets across the New Town.

Verified Dept of Transport records (based on Police reports and visualised by crashmap.co.uk) show that there were 18 incidents involving a bike and at least one other vehicle at the Dublin/Albany St junction between 1999 and 2023. Of these, 16 cyclists' injuries were classified as slight, 2 as severe. The worst months for incidents were Oct and Nov.

Some locals say the Dublin St junction with Drummond Pl is also dangerous. *Spurtle* has found no record of any traffic incidents there between 1999 and 2023.



COUNCIL LOG-JAM BLOCKS IMPROVEMENT STREAM

Councillors on the Traffic Regulation Orders Sub-Cmte (TROS) last month deferred deciding whether to make permanent some of the temporary safety improvements made to traffic infrastructure in the city's East Area introduced during the COVID-19 lockdown.

They complained that, despite ample opportunity to research the issue, officers had not provided enough information on costs and scheduling.

Officials explained that costs cannot be estimated until *after* elected members agree to make temporary measures permanent in this area. Only then (under a separate, 5-year, citywide, £500k pa spending programme) can coordinated and cost-efficient priorities be drawn up on how to proceed. These considerations would fall to the Transport & Environment Cmte (not TROS) for consideration.

Members finally set officers the 'extremely challenging task' of assembling the information in time for their next meeting on 4 Sept. Due to a set legal timescale for decision-making about this, the temporary traffic measures (popular among many pedestrians and cyclists) now risk removal.

Some attribute this procedural log-jam to a responsible refusal to spend public money without knowing what you get in return. Others say it stems from a basic misreading of TROS's proper remit. Hardened cynics detect political filibustering by those set against either the need for, or cost of, safe active-travel infrastructure.

Briefly



Following a Green motion back in May, the number of fly pasts at the **Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo** was limited to 5 for the second year running (in previous years there were 7). Cllr Heap cited the **Tornados, Apaches and Red Arrows'** noise/air pollution and traumatic effects on those fleeing war as reasons to ban or limit the displays.

Ruma's premises at **39 Broughton St** are on the market at a leasehold premium of £39k and rent of £72.5k + VAT. *Spurtle* has never understood this enterprise, which first seemed set for **Gayfield Sq** in summer 2023 before opening at its final prime location in Mar 2024 (Issues 332, 339). The bar has been open for just **5 days per week** (from 4pm) and does not serve food. Management says a 'change in personal circumstances' explains the sale. More at [bit.ly/4fScWDQ].

From **the Scotsman** (10 Apr 1833):—'Sunday, four young fellows were apprehended by the police, for setting fire to the furze on **Arthur Seat**, and thereby destroying the sheep pastures.'

The next meeting of the **Broughton History Society** is at 6pm on 8 Sep in McDonald Rd Library. **Chris Rutterford** will talk on *Colinton Library and Other Sites*.

Roe deer have been spotted in small numbers on **Calton Hill** during the summer. It is unclear whether they mean to settle or are simply wandering over from **Holyrood Park** to BBQ, score drugs and disport in the dark.

There is free Tai Chi in **Hopetoun Cres Gdn** on 8, 15 and 22 Sept at 2.30pm.

Councillors on the **Development Management Sub-Cmte** last month voted in favour of Spiegelteit International's retrospective application for planning permission in **St Andrew Sq Gdn**. This was not because they approved of the proposal (there was much they disliked about it, including how it began legally operating **before the DMSC even met**) but because granting consent was the only way to impose conditions **protecting trees**. They now aim to draw up stricter regulations for future festival producers. *Spurtle* is unconvinced. See [bit.ly/treepal].

Montgomery St locals have raised funds for a second issue (and 2 more) of their *Park Life* magazine. It will be out soon. Let's hope the publication continues to **heal community relations** rent by disputes over who is allowed in the park. On 21 Aug, the **Culture & Communities Cmte** upheld an earlier Recreation Cmte ruling that, under the latest version of management rules, Montgomery St Park be designated a **dog-free children's play area**.

New tenant sought for cottage

The Council is letting B-listed 1 Royal Ter Gdns (the former Gardener's Cottage restaurant) as commercial premises for £25k pa. 'Extremely accessible by foot and bus', the property has no on-site parking.

Built in 1839 as part of a wider design for 3 principal feuars by William Henry Playfair, the property's first resident was one John Niven. He was found negligent for grazing his horse on the grass and failing to lock the gates. James Turner followed from 1841 to 1859, then George Wood, who was asked to leave in 1871 after allowing neighbours to use part of the grounds as a bleaching green.

Railings (removed in the Second World War) enclosed the whole area in the early 1890s, with access restricted to local key holders. Under a long-term lease by the City, the grounds were opened to all in 1893. Their subsequent ruin or improvement was controversial (see p.3).



What next for Rodney Street?

The 2-storey industrial building with 15-space car park to the rear at 25 Rodney St has been on the market since Mar. It is now under offer.

Spurtle is aware of a plausible but unsubstantiated rumour that Caledonian Heritable (which owns, operates and invests in a licensed-trade portfolio of managed and tenanted premises) is behind the bid.

The 4 current tenants have leases until July 2027, worth in total £72k pa.

We have no idea what, if any, plans the prospective buyer has for the 0.259-acre site, but the previous owners had pre-application discussions earlier this year with Planning officers to map out two possible options.

Option 1 envisages a 4-storey, 17-unit (1–3-bdrm) building. Option 2 favours 4 2-bdrm duplexes in the converted warehouse, and 7 new 3–4-bdrm townhouses at the south of the site. Option 2 is preferred by officials since its adaptive reuse would help limit the development's embodied carbon footprint and retain the character of Eyre Pl Lane in line with City Plan 2030 guidelines.

Local residents will of course have their own views on all this given concerns about overlooking and daylighting which emerged during consideration of proposed purpose-built student accommodation on the former Jewsons site nearby (23/04048/FUL), refused in Dec 2023 and on appeal in Mar 2024 [bit.ly/EYPLno].

The basement at the far SW end of the site does not form part of the sale.



Red light signals *Go!* for tram snagging

Repairs to the Broughton–Newhaven tram extension can be tracked at [bit.ly/T2Spsnags]. As of 31 July, 56 high-priority issues had been rectified and another 37 were in progress. Work will resume this month following the end of a Festival Embargo.

The remaining 800+ snags are now prioritised as red (to be fixed by March 2026 at the latest), amber (by June 2026) or green (to be 'ingested' within normal Council works and repairs). Items are 'coloured' not just for how important they are but also for how they can most efficiently be addressed alongside other snags nearby.

Pessimists suspect 'green items' will get lost in the fog and may never emerge. They are disappointed at slower-than-hoped-for progress on fixing snags, and the reality that some snags may never be sorted. However, as Leith Central Community Council's Transport & Clean Streets convener Harald Tobermann says of the process: 'At least, it's transparent.'

In other news, Council consultation on extending the tram network to Granton in the North and to the BioQuarter and Royal Infirmary in the South began on 25 Aug. Comments should be submitted by 17 Nov. Tracey Gilbert MP supports the extension as a necessary investment in Edinburgh's infrastructure but acknowledges 'legitimate concerns' around preserving green space and existing active-travel routes.



No more overprovision

Over the summer, Edinburgh's Licensing Board voted 5:3 in favour of scrapping its 3-yearly overprovision policy. The policy, which began in 2018, had imposed a presumption against new alcohol licences being granted in parts of the capital including the city centre.



Cllr Chas Booth said scrapping the policy was 'a deeply retrograde step for public health'. Alcohol Focus Scotland's CEO Alison Douglas said, 'The more accessible alcohol is, the more people drink.' She urged licensing boards to make full use of all the existing powers available to them.

Some on the Board doubted whether any problem with overprovision exists, and (even it does) whether a blanket ban is the best solution. The emphasis should be on quality not quantity, they said, and other effective tools to control problem premises are available.

The Board's decision followed a consultation process which ran from 4 May last year to 24 Mar 2025. Its assessment was based in part on the number of occupants individual licensed premises may entertain.

Based on figures for 8 Intermediate Data Zones compiled in Dec 2023, we estimate Greater Spurtshire has room for around 39,145 drouthy souls at any one time. In 2018, the New Town & Broughton Community Council, which has supported the overprovision-zone policy, estimated the potential total in its own area of competence as closer to 51k (Issue 278, bit.ly/slntmth). Whichever figure is correct (they may both be), it will strike some readers as more than enough, and others as one of the main reasons for living here.

Broughton ambrosia



Nectar has replaced Goose at 73 Broughton St. The new restaurant promises a 'Greek Mediterranean Gastro Bar focused on high-quality cocktails'.

On the subject of alcohol and responsible drinking, who can forget the thoughts of Greek playwright Eubolus in his 4th-century-BC work *Semele*? For the convenience of readers, they are rendered here into Scots by friend of the paper Douglas Duff.

'For canny yins, I mix juist 3 jougs. The 1st is fur weelness, whilk they doon foremaist. The 2nd is fur hert-likin 'n' daffery. The 3rd is fur kip, efter whilk the wylie hauchle hame.

'The 4th (hee haw tae dae wi me) comes fae pridefulness. The 5th maks yellin; the 6th, bleezin belli-hooin; the 7th, black een. The 8th brings the Polis; the 9th, boak. The 10th rins tae madderam 'n' fowk hurlin furniture.'

Royal Terrace Gardens

Condensed from a letter to the Editor of the Evening Dispatch (15 June 1893) about what today is called London Rd Gdns. SIR,—Might I crave a corner of your paper to make known the feeling of the London Road residents with regard to the recent throwing open of the above gardens to the public?

On Sunday last, looking out upon what was once a pretty spot, the scene which met the eye was perfectly disgusting. At one corner the barefooted off-scourings of the town were plunging unmolested by the officer into a game of football, while all over the place groups of people were enjoying themselves in picnic-like fashion to their hearts' content. On Monday morning, upon taking a walk through the gardens, the empty bottles, egg shells, and stray branches of trees proved conclusively the class of people which had been attending the place on the day previous.

Being resident in the locality, I took out a couple of keys for the use of my family for a number of years, but since the new rule came into force the children cannot get in unless with their guardians. Now, it is not always convenient for parents to accompany their offspring, and I fail to see that it is necessary in the case of children who are taught properly how to conduct themselves. Far better to shut the place up altogether than to let it go under the present unsatisfactory arrangements.—I am, &c. RESIDENTER

The letter drew some support, but also outraged responses which decried the 'hysterical shrieking of a few snobs' as unchristian and narrow-minded selfishness.



Briefly



Road policing officers last month welcomed visitors collecting hire cars at Edinburgh Airport with **advice and wristbands** reminding them to drive on the left. It was a good idea. Perhaps in future, wristbands could also be issued advising visitors not to insist on **walking 3-abreast** along narrow footways and not to gather at street corners in **stationary groups of 15+** discussing the various attractions of each other, Big Macs and **nearby adjacent stationary groups of 15+** visitors doing the same thing.

Redford Properties want to alter and extend the B-listed semi-derelict former janitor's house next to Leith Walk PS on **Brunswick Rd.** A new porch with charcoal-coloured composite cladding would, says the architect, represent '**a well-mannered contemporary addition**'.

During work to build the **Broughton-Newhaven** tramline extension, Council staff removed 2 attractive and unusual benches from their **Leith Walk** spot next to **Gayfield Sq** for refurbishment [bit.ly/LWbench]. *Spurtle* has been chasing progress without much success. We are now promised **confirmation of a date** for reinstatement soon.

Plans to change the use of an office on **Northumberland St NE Lane** into a yoga studio have been approved, despite objections from 11 locals (25/01119/FUL). The **character and appearance** of the building and conservation area would not be affected, said officials, and 'yoga is not an activity that would generate significant levels of noise and disturbance'. At least, not if it's done on an empty stomach.

Two of **E Claremont St's** 3 great sump-humbling hollows met their come-uppance on 31 July. Workers lifted setts to reveal **compacted sand underneath**, not the expanding sub-surface sinkhole neighbours had envisaged in their worst imaginings. Some of the sand was replaced with a **firmer cement base course**. The cavities haven't gone but are now less depressing than before. **Two nearby basins remain.** Elsewhere, on **Gayfield St Lane**, residents are fuming at setts poorly relaid after recent utility works. They wonder how officials could sign-off such ugly trip hazards.

The Olive Branch on **Broughton St** closed briefly at the end of July, much to the alarm of **regular diners**. Happily, the premises had been emptied only to allow for refurbishment of the floorboards. **Normal service resumed** as soon as the varnish dried and there was no danger of loyal customers becoming even more stuck in their ways.

This school session, **Edinburgh Leisure** is promoting 'fun, friendly and expert' coaching for young people (P1 up) in **diving, climbing and tennis** [bit.ly/EdSports].

Moreover ...

New Town & Broughton Community Council has responded to 2 planning applications by Royal London. On **Henderson Row** (23/03716/FUL), it questions the 'alien form' of what others have described as the 'top-heavy' 'monstrosity' of a new 2-storey mansard roof. On **1 Thistle St** (25/03183/FUL), NTBCC welcomes office rather than hotel use but objects to the height and scale of the proposed new Scottish HQ, in particular a glazed extension dominating listed **Queen St** neighbours.

Police Scotland avoid chasing **dangerous or anti-social motorcyclists** in the city for fear of making things worse. Leith Police are now trialling pursuits by drone from an **undetectable distance**, with stops made later in relative safety for all.

A single lock-up garage benefiting from a kitchen and shower room with toilet and basin at **5 Scotland St Lane** has gone on the market for offers over £89k and is now under offer. The most recent attempt (**the seventh since 2013**) to turn it into a flat, business, office or studio was in 2019 [bit.ly/EHrepeats].

A trial of dockless ebikes for hire began in Edinburgh last month. They are managed by Swedish '**micromobility specialists**' Voi. *Voi!* is Swedish for 'Wow!' This is the sound some people make as they reach speeds of up to 15 mph uphill **assisted by battery power**, and by others as they trip over an object dumped on a footway.

Square & Crescent's 'opulent collection' of 42 new 1-3-bdrm flats and duplexes on **Henderson PI** is being marketed at [bit.ly/NobLots].

Roti King proposes to turn the former Charlie Miller haircutters on **S St Andrew St** into a restaurant serving Singaporean street food. Plans include a new door onto **Meuse Lane** with a hand-painted design depicting a Malaysian delivery driver on a motorbike.

The **British Medical Association's** 2nd attempt to install a platform lift and lower a window at the front of A-listed **14 Queen St** has been refused (25/02436/LBC). Officials said it would spoil the **appearance and character** of the building and conservation area. See Issues 348 and 351.

New at the bottom of **Broughton St** is Haute. The business at 111a curates luxury fashion pieces and offers styling and **personal shopping services** ('including our popular HAUTE Boss Bitch experience'). It also encourages '**highly incentivised customers**' to 'recirculate' unwanted old clothes, shoes, bags and accessories, thus contributing to a 'rebellion against the throwaway mindset'. More at [www.haute-LC.co.uk].

A report on busking management went to the **Culture & Communities Cmte** last month. To no-one's surprise, the highest sound-levels recorded were for pipers. Less predictably, the second noisiest were 'character performers', including **mime artists and living statues**. On Edinburgh's narrow streets of cobblestone, it seems, the sound of silence has never been louder.

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