

Spurtle



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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER

Free

IT NEVER POURS BUT IT FLOODS

Sustained rain in February and March led to the protracted flooding of the shared footpath/Route 75 cycleway through King George V Park. A large turbid pool forced passers-by either to edge around on the grass (which soon turned to mud) or clamber through the playpark.

In response to requests, Council staff belatedly cleaned the gullies here, but were unable to offer a permanent solution to this semi-permanent solution.

This is an old problem, which officials tried to alleviate in 2014 by installing underground 'crates' [bit.ly/3aGPINZ]. They now concede that these aren't big enough. There is no connection to the main drain network here, and building one would cost money which the Council doesn't have.

Spurtle wonders whether, at little expense, a narrow ditch could be dug on the park side of the railings, or a slight extension of the tarmac be made over the adjacent grassed area which doesn't flood but turns instead into a slippery and unsightly slough. Does any reader have a better idea?

In the long term, we should expect further inconveniences like this across the city as climate-changed rainfall increases beyond the capacity of existing infrastructure [bit.ly/2IAynKA].



Photo: Caroline Roussot.

SHELVE SUMMER SESSIONS, SAYS COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Last month the New Town & Broughton Community Council lent its weight to those opposing nine 'Summer Sessions' (amplified concerts) in West Princes Street Gardens this August [bit.ly/2vgN16S].

NTBCC was responding to the Council's call for comments, but given that the Culture & Communities Cmte had already approved the programme, and tickets are on sale, NTBCC questioned whether this constitutes genuine consultation.

Even so, NTBCC argued that the 25-day duration of the combined events, including set-up and derigging, would have an unreasonably negative impact on people wishing to relax in the Gardens. Similarly, the 6,000-people events, double the existing capacity of the Ross Bandstand and requiring twice the footprint, would spoil their appearance, availability, and accessibility.

NTBCC noted concerns about noisy disturbance of residents as far away as Powderhall, and disruption to the Edinburgh Tattoo.

It argued that screening events from view was objectionable. If necessary for safety reasons, it said, then the events should be held elsewhere.

NTBCC would look more favourably on fewer, smaller concerts held before the main Edinburgh Festival/Fringe, with noise levels stipulated and enforced.

It was at pains to stress its objections related to the concerts' number, duration, size and negative impacts on residential amenity; not to the content of the concerts, which it acknowledged many people would enjoy.

Spurtle suspects that such arguments will have no effect on an administration determined to maximise revenue from public spaces.



SLÁINTE, SPURTLESHIRE!



Image shows Vino display on Broughton St.

A lot has changed since the sudden arrival of Coronavirus and its imminent spread across Edinburgh. The scale and seriousness of fast-changing news has inevitably overtaken our coverage in these pages. Dates and timings reported here are very likely to change.

What's more, many of *Spurtle's* usual distribution points are now closed, so the print-run for this issue has been reduced. In the weeks to come, we'll have a clearer idea of which outlets remain and will keep you informed.

In the meantime, we expect at the very least to continue posting pdfs to our website at [bit.ly/3aaYkwn], and hope to attach enlarged versions to a variety of community-council and other noticeboards across the area. The views published here are *Spurtle's*, not those of the relevant noticeboard owners.

For news updates, features, and distractions, visit our website and go to 'Breaking news'. See also p. 4 for dependable sources of information.

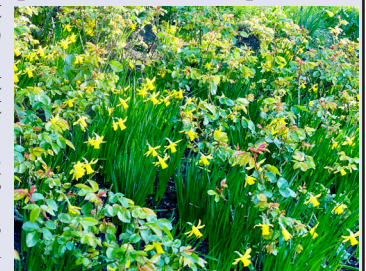
WILL THE FUTURE BE FOAMY?

In response to a freedom of information request by local activist and resident Simon Holledge, CEC last month clarified its use of glyphosate herbicides across Edinburgh in 2019.

It emerges that 3,180 litres were deployed to control weeds on streets, pavements, footpaths, new flower beds and meadow areas in parks and green spaces. Two applications in Wards 5 and 12 covered 100% of streets. No figures were provided for Ward 11.

Glyphosate inhibits production of a key enzyme in actively growing plants. Scientific opinion is divided on whether it poses a health risk to humans and animals, and if so under what circumstances, but concern is spreading. Weeds, meanwhile, are developing resistance.

Balerno residents – some of whom reported spray-related respiratory problems, burning sensations, and irritation of pet paws – have successfully campaigned for a temporary ban this summer. A more expensive hot-foam treatment [bit.ly/3b0AHab] will be trialled instead.



Briefly

This is a welcome addition at the eastern end of **E London St**, on a route serving four local schools. The new crossing is set at a **slight distance from the roundabout** and should be a much safer option for those who don't mind a fractional detour to use it.



Just when you thought it was safe to **slip on your crimson treads** and bestride the setts of Georgian Edinburgh, a disturbing presence returns. The lately silent **@NewTownFlaneur** has escaped the basement shackles of an affronted Fear (Issue 292) and is now back on the prowl. Beware.

Ediston and Orion Capital Managers originally planned to exhibit latest proposals for the **'New Town North'** site (formerly occupied by Royal Bank of Scotland on Dundas St) in person. That exhibition and any **related conversations** with stakeholders will now happen online, initially at [bit.ly/3dmT1vR] from noon on 2 Apr.

Royal Mail is to decorate a post box at the corner of **George St and St Andrew Sq** (20/00727/ADV). The proposal – timed to coincide with release of new stamps commemorating the Romantic poets – includes a floral silhouette and lines from William Blake's ***Auguries of Innocence***. If approved, the 'temporary' additions could remain for either 5 years or Eternity in an hour.

After 5 years and the elapse of their lease, **Sugar Daddy's Bakery** – purveyor of baked gluten-free deliciousness – has departed this parish. You can still find them in **Roseneath St** in Marchmont.

At the corner of **Bellevue and Mansfield Pls**, a mature elm in Drummond Community High School playground has begun coming into contact with a lamppost on the footway outside. **Amey seeks permission** to cut it back (20/00821/TCO). We'd prefer to see the lamppost moved.

The **New Town & Broughton Community Council** has objected to applications for 23 unspecific provisional alcohol licences in the new **St James Centre**, and a further 4 for At Pizza, Yo! Sushi, Five Guys, and The Alchemist [bit.ly/21xh90L]. The applications are all for premises in an **area already designated as one of overprovision**, but no reason for why the licences should be granted has been given. It also has concerns about licences being granted where the nature of the business is unclear.

Planning permission in principle has been granted for a (max) 220-unit residential development at the former John Lewis Depot on **Bonnington Road Lane** (17/05742/PPP).

Bemusing log-jam – brilliant or barking?

The unheralded appearance of these logs wired to railings beside Tanfield Bridge has caused considerable head scratching.

Some thought it must be an artistic installation. Others believed it was to deter dogs from reaching areas where ducks are nesting.

A spokesperson for the Water of Leith Conservation Trust tells us this is the work of a local resident who is trying to make it more difficult for people to wander beside the river causing soil erosion, and the undercutting and consequent loss of trees.

Not everyone is convinced by the likely efficacy of this solution, but *Spurtle* reckons the sudden unusual and unexplained arrival may indeed make people pause and think ... at least temporarily.

WoLCT itself hopes to do some willow spiling on the banking to protect it in future, as it has done in other locations on the river. However, this will have to wait until winter when the willow is dormant.



From headstone to Hedera and back again

In Nature, every species enjoys its own little ecological niche. And when one species declines, another expands to fill its space.

The same seems to be true of graveyards. Uncontrolled ivy has brought down numerous headstones and wall tablets in Warriston Cemetery over the years, prompting Friends there to begin the Sisyphean task of removing it.

But where ivy has been stripped on this patch, it has been replaced with illegible tagging and an intervention by the Mystery Mosaicist [bit.ly/3a0v77t].

Thanks go to reader Fiona Moredun for pointing this latest example out to us. She admires, she says, its 'enigmatic incompleteness'.



Moot assumptions underlie public-space management plan

Council officials are developing a Public Space Management Plan (PSMP) and a first draft is expected this month. The aim is to ensure coordinated, simplified, and transparent planning/management of events.

A report outlining the PSMP's background went to the Culture & Communities Cmte in January [bit.ly/2wVnFfb]. In Para 4.8 it established various principles for safeguarding public spaces and locals' amenity. We welcome these. However, the report also groups 'parks, public spaces and our streets' (4.8.1) as though public ownership makes them one entity, not three.

It then ascribes to this artificial amalgam 'public health, social, economic and environmental benefits'. But economic benefit has never been the main purpose of green spaces, and public health has never been the main purpose of streets etc. etc.

The report claims (4.8.3) 'animating' public spaces is an important feature of Edinburgh's status as a 'world festival city', as if festivalisation were an existential precondition rather than a comparatively recent addition grotesquely swollen by global tourism from its origins as a cultural response to postwar austerity.

It blithely states (4.8.5): 'The amount of utilisation of parks and public spaces is broadly currently appropriate, and neither significant reduction nor expansion is justified.' Says who?

On the contrary, *Spurtle* suspects many residents would welcome a reduction of events, concessions and attractions in the city centre. We also doubt many would welcome the mooted dispersal of disruption to hitherto quiet parts of the capital such as Pilrig Park (Issue 282). Public consultation on the PSMP is expected to start this month. A revised draft, based on feedback, will go to the C&C in June.



Better bulbs this spring

Over 3k LED bulbs will be installed across the city centre (Ward 11) between 6 April and the end of June.

They are claimed to be clearer, less dazzling, more efficient and reliable, longer lasting, and almost completely recyclable. Once fitted across all Edinburgh, they should save £54M in energy, maintenance, and disposal costs over 20 years.

Standardising lighting columns does not form part of this project. Officials recognise various, desirable aesthetic propositions, but face strict budget constraints. For more, see [bit.ly/2vgAd0i].

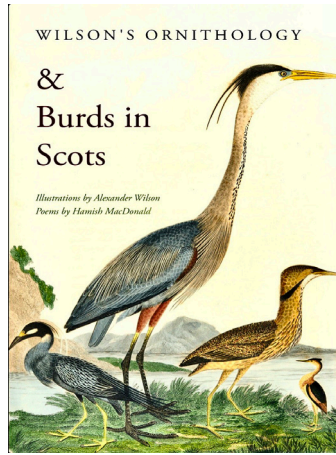
A houlet and ither burds

The latest publication by Scotland Street Press is a joyous pairing of Hamish MacDonald's new poems 'Burds in Scots' with plates from Alexander Wilson's *American Ornithology* (1808–14).

On one level, the work is important in highlighting the achievement of Wilson, who is known as the greatest ornithological illustrator before John Audubon, whom he clearly inspired. (They met in 1810, when both men were travelling in the USA.) Both artists were passionate in depicting birds 'from life' with scientific accuracy, while also displaying their beauty. Perhaps Wilson's oeuvre might be regarded as the overture to Audubon's mighty *Birds of America*.

Paul Walton's excellent introduction here relates Wilson's life story, from humble origins in Paisley as an impoverished weaver and controversial poet (he was a contemporary of Robert Burns) to his virtual enforced departure to America and subsequent intrepid explorations. Many of the native birds he pursued and recorded were new to science and now bear his name. Alas, Wilson died in penury, aged 47, worn out by his travels and work in securing publication of his mammoth nine-volume undertaking.

Wilson would have loved MacDonald's writing, which ranges from funny and quirky to intensely moving, always attuned to the essence of his chosen subjects. He is a fine Scots poet who sings to a great, unjustly neglected artist. This is quite simply a marvellous tour-de-force, and another SSP production to hold fast and dear.—*JRM*. Price: £9.95. ISBN: 978-1-910895-399.



Briefly

And now for some European news ...

In Germany they are preparing for the crisis by stocking up with sausage and cheese. That's the Wurst Käse scenario.

Scottish Ministers have approved a **Community's Right to Buy** bid by Our Leith Walk to purchase land at **106–54 Leith Walk** if current owners Drum Property Group decide to sell it. They would retain and improve the red sandstone building at **Stead's Pl**, using it for retail and office space with an emphasis on training and enterprise.

Edinburgh Council has, at the second time of asking, secured **significant Government funding** to refurbish the B-listed Powderhall Stables on **Broughton Rd**. The £1.2M will go towards creating a community, arts, and work hub at the centre of a new housing development (containing at least 35% affordable homes) on the site of the former **waste transfer station** (19/04683/PAN). CEC has already pledged £500k towards this element of the project. For background, see [bit.ly/38K492g].

The **Victoria Swim Centre** (plus gym, 2 fitness studios, and dedicated cycle studio) reopened in Mar after a 6-month refurbishment. Locals first took the plunge in its **25-yard pool** in 1899, but the water has been changed on numerous occasions since.

The Owl & Deer Coffee House and Bistro on **Haddington Pl** will soon be replaced by the Zaika Grill. *Zaika* means 'flavours' in Urdu, and 'my beloved hare' in Russian. We shall see.

Since last year, heavy lorries to-ing and fro-ing around a work site in **Cumberland St SE Lane** have caused a drop in the carriageway outside No. 33. This is now a frequent puddle, **with its own duck**. Meanwhile, a gully round the corner is blocked owing to concrete being poured down it. When locals approached **City Centre Road Services** about the problem, they were told that current funding only exists to fix 'safety defects'. Cumberland St's problems don't count as such, and have therefore been added to an **indefinite to-do list**.

'Edinburgh folk aren't simply pining for **bygone summers**. They're asking: What happened to familiarity, community and shared knowledge? They're asking for their home back.' Christopher Silver's opinion piece for **Bella Caledonia** here [bit.ly/2TIQd4t] raises important issues needing addressed before the 2022 Council election.

Canonmills Newsagent is offering NHS workers a 15% discount, excluding fags and lottery tickets.

Wightman wins in court

Lothian MSP Andy Wightman last month won his case in an action for defamation raised against him in the Court of Session.

In March 2017, Wildcat Haven Enterprises CIC had sought £750k in damages (+ 8% annual interest) in relation to two blogs written by Wightman in 2015 and 2016.

The arguments of pursuer and defendant are available here [bit.ly/2W2QYa8]. Lord Clark's opinion (plus the two blogs) is here [bit.ly/2W22qTu]. Wightman raised the bulk of his legal costs through two well-supported crowdfunders, contributors to which will now get most of their money back.

In a statement after the ruling, a delighted Wightman said, 'It is vital that Parliament modernises the law of defamation to ensure that it provides the right balance between freedom of expression and the rights of people not to have their reputations tarnished.'

'It is also important that the law is clear, so that writers and journalists can write confidently [and enjoy] the freedom of expression that is so important in any democracy.'

'Cross-swearing' follows fall

From the Edinburgh Evening News, 11 April 1879.

A woman named Rose Ann Gannon or Reynolds was charged, at the City Police Court, with having assaulted John Foley, a neighbour, on the common stair leading to their houses at Queen's Place, Greenside, on Saturday night. She pleaded not guilty.

Foley said as he was leaving his house about eleven o'clock on Saturday night, the prisoner came behind him and pushed him down the stair. He fell down 13 steps, and was severely injured about the head and legs.

Other witnesses who had seen the occurrence, said the prisoner, after giving Foley the push, went into her house and danced and spat.

Witnesses for the defence said they heard a noise as of someone falling downstairs, and afterwards heard Mrs Foley saying that,—“By God she would plank it on Reynolds.” It was also stated that Foley was drunk, and had been creating a disturbance in his own house during the evening.

The magistrate found the charge not proven, saying there had been a great deal of cross-swearing* in connection with the case, and the prisoner was discharged.

* *Contradictory evidence given under oath.*—*AM*

App to zap Common Repairs

Edinburgh's 170k residents in shared buildings could soon be using an app to manage common repairs.

The technology is being developed by Novoville for City of Edinburgh Council, and is expected to be released for public use this summer. The app allows tenement dwellers, for example, to identify problems and communicate about them in confidence before contacting a contractor to carry out any necessary work. It will supplement the help currently offered by CEC's shared repairs team [bit.ly/3anSdEK], and could potentially be useful in coordinating with absentee landlords or others who leave the building early and don't return until late.

We hope it will not entirely do away with that quaint old-fashioned practice of neighbours talking to each other.

Moreover ...

Footpath renovation works will begin on **E. Claremont St** on 20 April.

Revised plans for the **Picardy Place** tram stop have appeared in a new application for prior approval [bit.ly/3aHav3Q]. The most recent version includes access from a platform on the **central reservation**, this in addition to the island platform first envisaged [bit.ly/2W0yZB9] to allow easy connection with buses outside the cathedral. The northern carriageway will reduce from 3 lanes of traffic to 2.

Edinburgh Council plans to install on-street **e-vehicle charging points** (32 fast, 9 rapid, 25 slow) across **14 locations** by this Oct. No date has been set for possible trials of adapted street lighting columns.

Police Scotland have advised people to beware of scammers pretending to offer help. For details see [bit.ly/39iAAVO].

Arrangements are being made by the Council to **protect people facing homelessness** during the Coronavirus outbreak. Empty hotels, student halls, and self-contained flats will be made available, as will 'core packages' including food.

On 24 Mar, charges for all **on-street pay-and-display parking bays** were suspended until further notice. Yellow lines, loading bays, disabled parking places and car-club places will continue to be enforced.

Waste collections continue as usual, other than blue-box glass recycling collections. Residents are reminded to follow advice on the **safe disposal of waste** should they or someone living in their household have symptoms that may be caused by Coronavirus [bit.ly/2JaDGRr]. **Household Waste and Recycling Centres** are closed until further notice.

All play parks, mixed-use games area courts, outdoor exercise equipment, skateparks and car parks associated with parks will be closed. **Allotments will remain open**, but users are subject to national rules advising one trip per day outside the home. They should maintain social distancing.

Birth registrations have been postponed until normal service resumes. Marriage, civil-partnership and death registrations have been cancelled or postponed.

Attendees at **Council-facilitated funerals** are limited to a maximum of 15 close family members.

You can access a wide range of **Council services** online at www.edinburgh.gov.uk. You can report many concerns through the website. If you are experiencing an emergency or critical situation, call 0131 200 2000.

Spurte Team: E. Dickie, J. Dickie, M. Forde, J. Hart, M. Hart, D. Hill, A. McIntosh, J. R. Maclean, S. Michael, M. Orr, L. Rogers, C. Roussot, T. Smith, D. Sterratt, E. Taylor-Smith, D. Young.

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Next meeting: to be confirmed. For local information, visit the website at

<https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>

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Because of the COVID-19 outbreak my office is currently closed until further notice.

My team and I continue to assist constituents, are available to help as best we can, and can be contacted by phone or email.



The costs of this publication have been met out of parliamentary resources. The SPCB is not responsible for the content of external internet sites.

CORONAVIRUS CORNER

- For definitive NHS guidance on dealing with Coronavirus, visit [bit.ly/2J2dkRh].
- For accurate information on how the Council is responding to the pandemic, visit [bit.ly/398sYFq].
- Factual up-to-date coverage from the Scottish Government is available at [bit.ly/3aa8j5h].
- For useful news on volunteering to help in Edinburgh, visit: [bit.ly/2UBBg3E] and [bit.ly/3dmmQwE].
- And finally, if any reader finds themselves vulnerable or struggling, contact us at the number or email address on Page 1, top-right. We'll seek reliable advice and solutions on your behalf.