

Spurtle



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No 328

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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

LOCALS PLEAD FOR A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

Sleep-deprived residents blocked over 20 not-in-service buses on E London St last month. For an hour in the evening on 19 Apr, locals used the eastern pedestrian crossing to halt buses and plead with drivers on the night shift to use a different route.

As reported in Mar [bit.ly/No325p1], locals blame LB for noise levels here which are on average 30 per cent above the World Health Organisation's recommended limit. They say 350 buses using the setted carriageway 24/7 is intolerable and unfair, especially when quieter and less densely populated alternatives exist.

Lothian Buses says its drivers can choose which route to take when their vehicle is not-in-service. Some drivers told protesters the firm gives them no such option. Reactions to the protest were mixed – it remains to be seen whether ongoing stoppages here will persuade or antagonise. *Spurtle* has approached LB for a comment.



GRAND SPAN

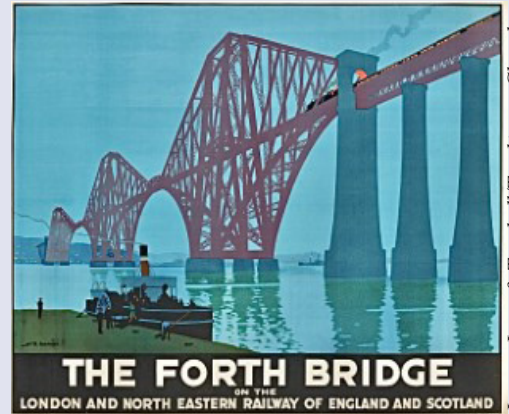


Image: Lyon & Turnbull/Tomkinson Churcher.

This inky and evocative lithographic railway poster by Henry George Gawthorne (1879–1941) went on sale at auction in Broughton Pl's Lyon & Turnbull late last month. It was estimated to fetch between £7k and £9k. The original was first exhibited in March 1928 at LNER's boardroom on Waterloo Pl. The *Southern Reporter* then enthused: 'The artist has caught the wonder of [the bridge's] spidery strength, and its airy tracery against the night sky makes a picture at once charming and effective. Its publicity value is high.'

END OF NARCISSUS – SAD REFLECTION OF HARD TIMES

To universal dismay, *Spurtle* broke the news last month that Narcissus Flowers ceased trading on 30 March.

We hear the end was not due not to lack of sales. Rather, the company succumbed to a difficult business climate: costs (especially those associated with fuel for growing and transporting flowers) have more than doubled since before the pandemic, with no possibility of passing these on in full to customers.

This, plus Brexit-related import complications, have led to profit margins for small independent florists being squeezed.

Employees at Narcissus were shocked to be laid off 24 hours before pay-day. When we spoke to some in early April, they were also disappointed not to have had any personal contact with directors.

Narcissus Flowers began in 2003 and operated at 2 other locations on Broughton St before expanding to the latest premises in April 2006 [bit.ly/No135p3].

In Sept 2010, it provided posies (Scottish thistles, white roses, dahlias and wax flowers) for H.M. the Queen and Pope Benedict XVI during the latter's pastoral visit to Edinburgh.

Narcissus was a high-profile attraction for visitors from across the city, and its demise is a blow to all businesses in the neighbourhood. We will miss its seasonal window and pavement displays, and the skill, artistry and friendliness of knowledgeable staff.

For many years, the premises also served as *Spurtle's* high-street post-box. Please now address or hand deliver mail for us to Broughton Spurtle, c/o The Yard, 61–3 Broughton St, Edinburgh EH1 3RJ.



BRING ME SUNSHINE

A resident living in the potential shadow of proposed student housing on Eyre Pl has challenged the developer's calculations regarding sunlight (22/03834/FUL).

CA Eyre Place (Edinburgh) Property failed to factor in 2 nearby structures when considering how much light would reach adjacent tenements on completion of its project. In so doing, it underestimated the development's impact on neighbours' amenity.

Hannah Edwards' concerns about the results were confirmed by the Building Research Establishment. She has now forwarded her findings – along with the developer's acknowledgement of error – to the Scottish Govt Reporter considering the application [bit.ly/No326p1].

Having lost trust in CAEPEP's competence, Ms Edwards wants BRE to conduct an independent sunlight study which takes account of all relevant features. She wonders how many other planning applications have included such important mistakes.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Nuveen Real Estate's plan to erect a 2.3m x 3m Halo-lit (white LED) 'W' on the spike of the Golden Turd facing west down George St has been refused (22/04341/ADV) because of its negative impact on the World Heritage Site and New Town Conservation Area. The 12-storey self-styled 'decadent and sophisticated' W Edinburgh hotel is scheduled to open this coming winter [bit.ly/GTurd].

NRE also wants to erect a 3.26m x 2.25m x 3m bronze-

finish 'W', incorporating a digital screen/display, on the paved surface of St James Sq [bit.ly/GoldTrdW]. A determination is expected by 16 May.

The only good thing about the proposal is that, if successful, it would get in the way of the CEC-rejected temporary hutted structures and enclosures, including a bar and other associated works, which NRE is now appealing to the Scottish Govt [bit.ly/No325p1]. A decision is anticipated by 6 June.

Briefly



Edinburgh Street Food's advertisement outside the **OMNi Centre** has been refused consent [bit.ly/No327p3]. The **Chief Planning Officer** liked everything about it except its position, design, colour and lighting scheme, its unacceptable intrusion into the streetscape and its visual clutter to the detriment of amenity in the **New Town World Heritage Site** and conservation area. He also found the way it places an obstacle in the public realm adversely impacts pedestrian safety and persons with disability. *Spurtle's Twitter response* (variously spluttered at by 94k+ viewers) occasioned lively debate: [bit.ly/niptass].

Throughout this issue, for **background information and supplementary detail**, copy/paste the [bit.ly/...] links within square brackets into your browser.

At **Broughton History Society's** next meeting (22 May), John Lawson (Edinburgh City Archaeologist) will talk about '**A Line Extended: Archaeological Work on the Edinburgh to Newhaven Tram 2019–23**'. See [bit.ly/BrHSoc].

Moorgath Group's appeal to the Council to operate a pop-up 'Festival Village' above **Waverley Market** for another 3 years was unanimously refused by the Development Management Sub-Cmte last month. MG said **400+ jobs are at stake** and the venture has 'overwhelming support'. Network Rail said it **blocked access to the lift** and attracted anti-social behaviour (something Police Scotland denied). Officials said it could be too loud. Councillors said it was the wrong thing in the Waverley Valley and of **insufficient quality**.

Fog shrouds the future of **Fantasy Island** in **Picardy Pl**. The new public realm was supposed to have been finished by the end of March. Some suspect difficulties anent **anti-terrorism bollards** have delayed progress. Others suggest a tramwork-loving troll emerges at night and wrecks efforts to beautify the area.

Eyre Place Properties Ltd seeks planning permission (23/01201/FUL) to knock down the former **Smithies bar** and create 1 three-bdrm apartment and 10 two-bdrm ones on this and the adjacent vacant site [bit.ly/EyPlgdn]. The proposal envisages 4 floors (mostly **2-storey from street level**) with a green roof and garden spaces to the rear. No vehicle parking. The accompanying daylight assessment doesn't take into account the **proposed 6-storey student accommodation** across the road. *Spurtle* hasn't found anyone who likes the **boxlike cookie-cutter appearance** of the proposal. Its appearance was described at last month's New Town & Broughton Community Council as 'absolutely dire'. A few tell us they admire its '**useful compact ingenuity**'. Some applaud its 'respectful' size and massing.

Osler seeks more time for hearings

With cross-party support, Cllr Osler (Ward 5) seeks a change in rules about how long the Council can take to determine planning applications (2 months for local ones, 4 months for major ones).

As Planning Convener, she has approached Tom Arthur MSP, Scottish Govt Minister for Public Finance, Planning & Community Wealth, seeking more time so that communities and other stakeholders can express views at hearings.

While accepting applicants' right to have cases considered in timely fashion, she says extension (under revised legislation and/or processing agreements with developers) would reflect the 'volume and complexity' of applications facing Edinburgh's Planning Dept in comparison to other local authorities.

Under the current system, applicants can withdraw their cases from the Development Management Sub-Cmte's consideration, citing non-determination, when a decision is delayed due to a hearing being granted.

This was what happened in Feb when the developer bypassed a hearing and took its application for student housing and town houses on Eyre Pl direct to Scottish Ministers [bit.ly/No326p1].

The switch drew howls of frustration from residents, campaigners and elected representatives. There are concerns that, without a rule change, such tactics could become standard practice, to the detriment of planning democracy.

Start spreading the noise

Northumberland Street Properties aims to convert redundant office space at 1 Broughton Mkt into 7 serviced short-term-let units, including a new gable staircase and zinc-clad penthouse

Chris Dobson, director of architects 3DReid, told the *Urban Realm* website last month, 'It's been a real pleasure to be afforded the opportunity to consider a contemporary intervention to this location, one which seeks to draw upon its rich industrial heritage and idiosyncrasies, whilst further diversifying the use and animation of the area' [bit.ly/URCantona]. Cue laughter.

The developer promises to prevent possible party disruption by vetting guests (How?), installing noise monitors (Connected to which effective agents?) and establishing over-occupancy controls (Underfloor leprechauns, let's hope, with cattle-prods). Few trust unsubstantiated assurances.

Spurtle predicts that the massed pipes and drums of the Drummond Civic Association will soon muster to oppose any potential disturbance.



City-centre drivers bypass rules

In responses to Freedom of Information requests by Edward Tissiman, the Council revealed last month that it doesn't collect data on the location or nature of parking offences in Edinburgh.

Instead, it logs part of the postcodes of 'registered keepers' addresses' (not even the offending drivers' addresses). In practical terms, this is useless for the rational shaping of enforcement [bit.ly/Edpkdata].

In related news, *Spurtle* learns that although a mounted camera has monitored over 900 motorists per week illegally turning left from Leith Walk into London Rd, it does not record registration plates. Even if it did, Police Scotland would lack resources to process such data.

Leith Central Community Council understands the Tram Team are considering installation of more sophisticated camera/enforcement IT. However, some observers say no 'solution' will work without driver consensus.

Both New Town & Broughton CC and LCCC argue that, however right in theory the no-left turn is, it hasn't worked in practice in advance of a regular tram service here. They blame it for congestion at Picardy Pl and increased use of E-W residential streets off Leith Walk. LCCC calls for urgent upgrades to pedestrian crossings on offshoots along the Walk.



Mounting cost of old Royal High

The Royal High School Preservation Trust said last month that building a new home for St Mary's Music School, a concert venue and National Centre for Music on Regent Rd will cost 'significantly' more than first expected.

The charitable Dunard Fund's backing of £55m (which includes maintenance and running of the finished scheme) will have to be supplemented. An announcement of the sum required will follow surveys over the next few months to determine how much rock under the old Royal High School needs removed.

RHST is confident the money can be raised from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and other sources. It still expects to complete the project in 2027.

The news of spiraling costs, published first in the *Edinburgh Evening News*, is no surprise. The UK construction industry has faced inflation and price rises due to various combinations of Brexit, Covid-19 lockdowns, and shortages of labour and materials.

Growing for the future

With the backing of Edinburgh & Lothians Green Space Trust (ELGT), 24 P6 pupils from Broughton Primary School have helped plant 600 trees in Pilrig Park. The resulting 'Wee Forest' is one of 27 in Scotland: small, dense, fast-growing, native woodlands established in areas about the size of a tennis court.

NatureScot says these are prepared and planted using a technique developed by Japanese botanist Dr Akira Miyawaki in the 1970s. The method encourages accelerated forest development in an urban setting.

Elsewhere, in Inverleith Park, the Fringe Forest Project and Caledonian Horticulture have planted 75 saplings – silver birch, rowan, hawthorn and hazel – to encourage birds and insects and to increase biodiversity. They aim to plant 75k trees across Scotland to celebrate 75 years of the Edinburgh Fringe. Fringe volunteers, Friends of Inverleith Park, and Council park wardens did the spadework without drama.

Meanwhile, since the 1990s, the number of trees in Edinburgh's streets, parks and woodlands has fallen from 11k to 8.5k – roughly 33%. ELGT means to reverse that by planting 6k+ saplings a year, where possible duplicating landmark specimens 30–50 years before the originals die. To fund this work, ELGT invites donations of £20–£5,000. Details at [bit.ly/Edintree].



Briefly



Trouble brews over fresh tarmac on parts of **Claremont Grove** and the unadopted **Claremont St E Lane** [bit.ly/No311p4]. Some say vehicles here would **restrict access** for residents and emergency services. They quote the consented scheme's **supporting statement** as follows: 'There is currently no car parking associated with the property and **none is provided**. There is on-street car parking and permit-resident parking available' (18/00708/LBC).

Responding to last month's article on **purpose-built student accommodation** in Spurtleshire [bit.ly/No327p3], Dr Ella Taylor-Smith points out that not *all* students at Edinburgh universities **add to the local population**: 'A huge percentage are already resident here, and commute in from, for example, **Fife or Livingston**.'

Canon St has closed for 18 months during construction of commercial space and 11 flats at Nos 1–3.

Climate activists returned on 28 Mar, deflating – they claimed – 40 sport utility vehicles' tyres on streets including **Drummond Pl, Dundonald St, Fettes Row, Scotland St and Royal Cres**. New Town farmers were furious.

The Wee Leith Shop's new owner seeks a certificate of lawfulness for it to continue at **340A Leith Walk** as a Class 1 retail/bottleshop offsales outlet. The 5.12m² premises (**bit of a squeeze for beer-bellied bevviars**) have been used for alcohol sales since 2002 [bit.ly/bllysqze].

Just before the Easter holiday, **Drummond CHS** held a Culture Day to celebrate the diverse backgrounds of pupils and staff across the school community. **Not including English**, on 18 Apr 2023, Drummond's 567 students spoke between them some **47 languages**, including: Arabic, Bahasa Malay, Bengali, Bulgarian, Catalan, Chinese (Cantonese, Modern Standard/Mandarin), Danish, Dutch, French, Gaelic (Scottish), German, Greek, Hindi, Hungarian/Magyar, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Kurdish, Lithuanian, Malayalam, Maltese, Mandarin, Ndebele, Nepalese, Pashto, Romanian, Russian, Scots, Serbo-Croatian, Slovene, Spanish, Swedish, Tagalog/Filipino, Tamil, Telugu, Ukrainian, Urdu, Wolof, and Yoruba.

A report to the Council's Transport & Environment Cmte last month identified the junction of **Leith St, Waterloo Pl and Princes St** as the 4th most dangerous in Edinburgh. An as-yet-to-be-designed 'substantive improvement' will at some future point address the problem. The **Abbey Mount and Rodney St** crossroads came in at Nos 15 and 35 respectively. **Broughton St's** roundabout was No. 29. The assessment was based on 15 criteria, including the **number and severity of personal injury collisions** over a 5-year period up to 2021. Details: [bit.ly/3L6hit2].

High hopes for Calton Hill

Friends of Calton Hill's first meeting attracted 30+ people.

Collective gallery's director Sorcha Carey welcomed attendees to Observatory House before Dr Iain Gordon Brown talked about the city's incomplete Acropolis: a fitting monument, according to Robert Louis Stevenson, to Scotland's parsimony, faction and self-congratulation [bit.ly/No326p3].

Linda Anglin, senior manager for the Council's Thriving Green Spaces project, spoke of the challenges involved in managing and enhancing Edinburgh parks for all during a time of budget constraints.

Clr Hal Osler said Calton Hill's increased popularity in recent years coincided with neglect of its upkeep and improvement – something she means to address.

Silke Schneider, senior conservation manager at Edinburgh World Heritage, outlined the Hill's literal, architectural and cultural centrality to the capital.

Ward 11 cllrs Macfarlane and Miller made brief enthusiastic declarations of support for the new group.

From the floor, issues of concern to members included: completion of the 2018 Management Plan [bit.ly/CHiMP18]; anti-social behaviour; preserving wildlife; over-use and over-tourism; litter; informal firework displays; restoration of controlled vehicle access; and how to define the area in which the group will busy itself.

FCH has 55 members so far. The next meeting will be in June. Visit: [bit.ly/FrndsCH].



Cut-price coronation not cheap enough

The coronation of King William IV and Queen Caroline prompted 'Examiner's' sarcastic 17-verse celebration in the *Caledonian Mercury* on 27 Sept 1831. While funny, it did not do justice to William's insistence on a simpler and less expensive ceremonial than his predecessor's (just £30k compared to £240k). Below is a much reduced version.—AM

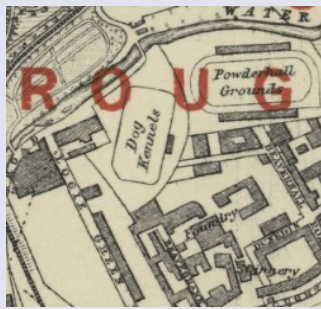
God prosper long our noble King!
Our taxes, debt and all!
A Coronation late there did
In Westminster befall;
To crown our gracious King and Queen,
Earl Marshal took his way;
The child unborn may not behold
The like of such a day.

Hurra! For the King—huzza, for the Queen
They've taken them both to be crowned;
And its only to cost this time, they say,
One hundred thousand pound.

Then, God preserve our noble Monarch,
And make our taxes small,
And grant that Coronation-days
More seldom may befall;
And give us heart and voice to praise,
A King of such high worth,
Who cost us crowning but half as much,
As his brother George the Fourth.



Moreover ...



In Issue 327, we quibbled on grammatical grounds about the name 'St Bernards' for a new housing development on **Logie Green Rd**. Caroline Roussot thinks a better name for the new housing complex might acknowledge some champion of the **former greyhound track** which once stood almost adjacent. Perhaps Jesmond Cutlet Close or Boher Ash Green.

Two-way motor traffic resumed across **North Bridge** on 21 Apr. The footway on its W side will remain closed for now. Following unforeseen complications, the **£86m refurbishment** (originally costed at £22.3m) is now expected to finish in spring 2025 [bit.ly/NBrefurb].

Local guerrilla gardeners have restored the **Bellevue PI** flowerbed to its former 'Granny Thompson' pomp but without the benign battiness. Opinions vary about this.

Congratulations to Roan Irving, manager at the Coop branch on **McDonald Rd**. He was nominated for the *Retail Week Awards 2023* 'Store Heroes' category. He's described as 'an **exceptional young retail manager**, embracing Co-op's ethical and community values while selflessly putting colleague development and support for the community foremost'.

Broughton Primary School has achieved a bronze award from UNICEF. The citation attests that BPS is 'committed to placing the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** at the heart of their ethos and is working towards becoming a **Rights Respecting School**'.

Trams began daylight testing of the route from **Newhaven to Broughton** on 19 Apr. This welcome progress allows passers-by to enjoy, from a safe distance, alarmingly close encounters between trams and HGVs.

Leith Community Policing Team's next 'surgery' will be on 31 May at 1pm in **McDonald Rd Library**.

Research into a basement ghost-sign at **Hart St/Broughton PI** has uncovered a retail history of **enterprising women** which spans two centuries. See Breaking News at [bit.ly/ghstsgn].

Poppyscotland's Poppy Quest event on 3 June is a family-friendly 10 km yomp round Edinburgh, solving clues. Starting and finishing at the **Poppy Factory** on **Logie Green Rd**, participants get a map and a series of questions to navigate a route, with the chance of **winning prizes**. To find out more and register, visit [bit.ly/pppyymp].

Shabby-chic **Shangri-La** on **Rodney St** has shut. **Contrary to local rumour**, the former head chef was not a well preserved, 200-year-old Catholic priest of French or Luxembourgian origin.

Spurtle Team: E. Dickie, J. Dickie, C. Ellis, J. Hart, M. Hart, D. Hill, A. McIntosh, S. Michael, M. Orr, W. Quinn, C. Roussot, E. Roussot, T. Smith, D. Sterratt, E. Taylor-Smith.
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A forum for local people who want to engage with and work for their local community.

Participate in local democracy.

Make representations to City of Edinburgh Council, other public bodies and private agencies on everything that matters locally.

Next meeting: 7pm, Mon. 15 May, Nelson Hall, McDonald Road Library.

<https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>

Ben Macpherson MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Edinburgh Northern and Leith Constituency

"I am here to help and serve all constituents in Edinburgh Northern & Leith. If you need assistance, or if you would like to discuss any issues or ideas, please contact me or come and see me at one of my monthly Drop-in Help & Advice Surgeries."

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15:30 to 16:30 Leith Community Centre, 12A Newkirkgate, EH6 6AD	

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Foysoil Choudhury MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Lothian Region

As your Lothian MSP I want to listen, take action and make a lasting difference.

I hold regular advice surgeries for constituents to raise any issue directly, to book an appointment please contact me:

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