

Spurtle



Find us at: www.broughtonspurtle.org.uk



BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER *Free*

**December
2025**

No 357

Tel: 07455 770474

spurtle@hotmail.co.uk

St MARK'S PATH CLOSED

The announcement that St Mark's Path would close surprised and annoyed locals last month [bit.ly/SMPk].

With only a few days' notice, contractor CCG announced that the busy route connecting Broughton Rd to St Mark's Park and the North Edinburgh Path Network would close from 17 Nov for at least 8 weeks and possibly until spring 2027.

A steep alternative route exists via Broughton Point, Powderhall Rd and St Mark's Bridge but is unsuitable for those with mobility issues, wheelchair users and pram pushers.

Developers have imposed the closure during work on drainage and footway infrastructure for the mixed-housing under construction at the former bowling greens (21/00381/FUL). In the longer term, CCG have health-and-safety concerns about where construction traffic will cross the Path to access site storage.

Criticism and concerns

Frustrated observers criticise both the closure and its poor communication. They say CCG has had ample time to plan a more accessible temporary route roughly parallel to St Mark's Path.



Cllr Caldwell (Ward 12) has called for the existing Path to remain open and accessible as much as possible. He seeks assurances about how site traffic will be controlled so close to Broughton Primary School.

Police-box café owner Yossi Mazon has operated at one end of the Path for 7 years. With footfall curtailed and his premises so close to construction work, he fears for his business and personal safety.

He continues to seek promises from contractors and officials that his utilities will not be interrupted. He has lodged formal complaints with Planning Enforcement

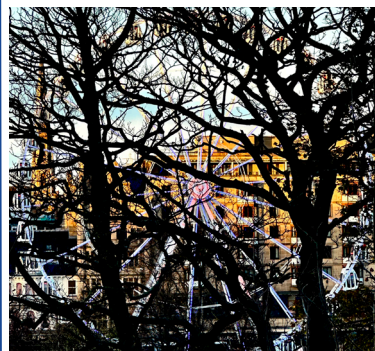
about inadequate consultation and the behaviour of certain Council and CCG representatives.

Like most locals we have spoken to, Mazon supports the Powderhall development. Unfortunately, after a promising start, the Council and CCG have not only shot themselves in the foot but also scored an own goal with it.

PROTECTING TREES, AT LAST

Spurtle welcomes the decision by proprietors of St Andrew Sq Garden (owners of neighbouring buildings) not to allow events there this Christmas and Hogmanay.

They correctly reason that the area cannot sustain 2 periods of intense footfall each year and prefer to prioritise the summer Festival period after which the grass has a better chance of recovery. One might think they could have arrived at this conclusion over 10 years ago, but better late than never.



In a separate development, a report to the Planning Cmte found that tree protection measures around the Spiegeltent last summer were inadequate. It said the location isn't right for this purpose in future.

Officials said the Council has sufficient powers to protect trees but will take a more proactive approach to Planning Enforcement when they believe public/neighbourhood amenity or interest is adversely affected. Officers will work harder to ensure Festival organisers submit planning applications, including tree protection measures, 'timeously' rather than at the last minute or retrospectively.

Elsewhere, councillors on the Development Management Subcmte last month refused consent for an additional 30 Festive trading concessions in the lower tier of E Princes St Gdns. They said these would have had an adverse impact on the setting of the Historic Gardens and Landscape.

STARS OF WONDER



We wish all our readers a blithe Yule and a happy New Year. The next printed *Spurtle* appears on 1 Feb. Between now and then, we'll post news updates and peculiar honours to our website. We'll share the location of this photograph in Issue 358 and invite you to send us similar obscure beauties for future publication. We rely on our readers for ideas, stories, images, various expertise and occasional limbs. If you'd like to lend a hand, contact [spurtle@hotmail.co.uk].

BAXTER'S PLACE

Ziydin Properties wants to convert the old Edinburgh City Football Club at 7 Baxter's Pl into 6 serviced apartments (3 x 2-bdrm, 3 x 1 bdrm). Work on 2 of the apartments, which did not need planning permission or listed building consent, began in Feb. They are now complete and operational. A proposed reception area with toilet and refreshment facilities would be staffed 24/7 (25/05562/FULSTL).

A similar application here was refused in June because of its likely adverse impact on residential amenity and loss of housing in part of the property (25/00469/FUL-STL).

Having sought legal opinion, the applicant now asserts that the established use of the whole property was and remains a social club and so no loss of residential units would result from the proposal.

Neighbours and the New Town & Broughton Community Council disagree and voice concerns about servicing, obnoxious behaviour, disturbance and loss of privacy based on previous (unauthorised) occupation patterns.



Briefly



Financial donations totalling £1.2k+ by the **Calton Hill Conservation Trust**, Collective Gallery, Calton Café and the Seven Hills Race & Challenge organisers have paid for 300m² of **Rhizomatous Tall Fescue Turf** on eroded sections of Calton Hill near the National Monument. With topsoil and delivery logistics provided by the Council, 11 volunteers and 2 rangers laid the **tough-as-old-boots** grass over 3 days in Nov.

French shopping behemoth **Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield** has bought Nuveen Real Estate's 25% (£250m) interest in the **St James Qtr**. It will take over management of the complex, and a **URW-flavoured** name change is anticipated for 2026. Pension investor **APG** will retain its 75% controlling stake overseeing any Westfield Edimbourg St Jacques.

On 5 Nov, councillors approved Royal London's plans for a revamped Scottish HQ between **Thistle and Queen Sts** (Issue 354). This, despite objections by some to **'over-dominant height and massing'** of new offices added to the roof.

Revamped premises at **38 E Claremont St**, teasingly titled 'haze' in the window (Issue 356), will open in late Jan as a **beauty salon**. Hazel Neil, who has family connections to **Broughton PI**, is the presence in the mist.

Barclay Price has published several histories of Edinburgh streets and areas. He is now studying **Great King St** and would welcome details of interesting former residents whom he may not have come across in his research. Also any photos and images of the street. Email: [gksbook2026@gmail.com].

Stuart Ralston and Jade Johnston have opened 2 venues on **Broughton St**. At No. 36, in the ground-floor space formerly occupied by Fhior, is **Vinette**: a Parisian-wstyled wine bar serving Continental sharing plates and bistro dishes. Downstairs, cocktails are available at **Vivien** in a space inspired by the 'rebellious and inquisitive spirit' of Belle Epoque poet **Renée Vivien**. Also, 'the aesthetic principles of decadence'. We anticipate odd things with oysters [bit.ly/RALdecoys].

Councillors last month asked officials to provide a more inspiring vision for the **Princes St & Waverley Valley Strategy**. See [bit.ly/PStWVs].

Train-history enthusiasts David Sterratt and Robert Drysdale found **numerous errors** in our Issue 356 piece **'Full Steam Ahead'**. We have seen the error of our ways: [bit.ly/OMGBS].

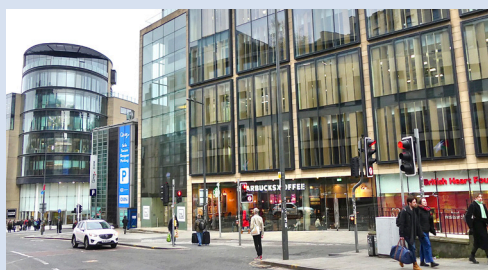
Cllr MacFarlane (Ward 11) has confirmed that 4 dead trees in **Picardy PI** will be replaced this winter. We trust they will be **well bedded in** by the time the Council fatally neglects to water them next summer.

Need to coordinate Cube and Square

Owner Patrizia Frankfurt wants to refurbish 'The Cube' at 45 Leith St (25/05534/FUL). It aims to improve attractiveness for potential occupants, lower energy use and introduce 'sustainability credentials'.

Office space and common areas would be refurbished and upgraded. The underground car park would switch to cycle storage, changing facilities, 'wellness suite', loos, showers and dry room. New seating and planting would improve the top-floor terrace. Leaks in the external envelope would be fixed. Costa Coffee and the British Heart Foundation would remain.

These works appear unobjectionable, but care will be needed so as not to worsen disruption caused by Ardstone's recently consented reworking of the 'Calton Sq' building adjacent (24/03604/FUL). Leith Central Community Council is calling for Planning conditions.



Curmurring on the Crescent

S1 Developments wants 14–15 Claremont Cres to run as short-term lets (25/05228/FULSTL).

The old Claremont Hotel had 18 bedrooms for 50+ guests. The proposed 7 serviced 2-bdrm apartments would accommodate up to 28 guests. S1D says the new model – with no function room or commercial kitchen – would reduce impact on the local amenity and character of the street.

New Town & Broughton Community Council backs neighbours objecting to: unacceptable disturbance from potentially rowdy guests, frequent changeovers, and loss of housing.



That last point is the technical nub of the problem. S1D originally developed the apartments as private dwellings but failed to sell them. Neighbours say this constituted an effective change of use from hotel to dwelling. S1D argues that, because the homes weren't occupied, the last use of the properties remained as a hotel.

Though unconnected, this case reminds many of Baxter's PI (p.1). Observers suspect developers are gaming the system. Some of Edinburgh Council's previous refusals of similar applications have been lost on appeal, and there are calls for reform of the rules by Holyrood.

Great and small

Never mind the Devil, the Delight is in the detail. In 82 pages of colour photographs, David Stock's *Edinburgh Bestiary* catalogues 700+ real or imaginary beasts found across the capital: birds, fish, fowl, insects, reptiles, amphibians, molluscs, humans, chimaeras and slithering things with no name or obvious political affiliation.

This artificial natural world is variously carved, painted, inscribed, printed and defleshed. Some instances are blindingly obvious; others hide in plain sight.

Arranged alphabetically, most are described in Stock's unashamedly partial text. One of this reviewer's favourites is the sculpted octopus pictured here, for which neither location nor creator is listed. It is an unhelpful – sometimes maddening – approach which, the author says, 'allows for a little sleuthing'.

Stock's book is self-published and, like his earlier *Edinburgh Squares* (Issue 344), can be hand-delivered by the author to avoid the expense of postage. Charming and idiosyncratic, it costs £20 (£40 for both titles). Email: [davidelstock@hotmail.com] — AM.



Image: David Stock.

Spurtle seeks foul-weather friends

It's the most wonderful time of the year, with *Spurtle* shaking its hat at passers-by and asking for old and new friends to take out a fresh subscription.

Subscribers' contributions supplement what we raise through advertising and ensure we have a stable float for production costs when cashflow freezes over. Subscribers also provide a source of goodwill and wise support during occasional high winds.

Annual subscriptions cost £16 (or whatever you can afford) for a monthly hand-delivered copy in Broughton and £25 for posted copies.

Please make cheques payable to Spurtle, c/o The Yard, 61–63 Broughton St, Edinburgh EH1 3RJ. E-transfer details available on request. Thank you.

Obituary: David Gow (1945–2025)

David Gow, distinguished journalist and former Chair of Fettes Row & Royal Cres Residents Assoc, died on 3 Nov aged 80.

Edinburgh-born, Gow was brought up in York then read for a degree in French and German at Oxford Univ. His career began at the *Scotsman* in 1969, where he served as European, then labour, then London correspondent before joining the *Guardian* 20 years later.

He specialised on Europe, education, business, industry and US issues until retirement and return to Edinburgh in 2012. He was an active and engaged citizen, with occasional New Town & Broughton Community Council involvement and pieces for the *Spurtle*. Latterly, he campaigned against 'insensitive' development of the New Town Qtr and Centrum/BUPA Houses on Dundas St.

Throughout adulthood, Gow was staunchly left-wing and pro-European. He helped set up the *Sceptical Scot* in 2015; an online platform for evidence-led and non-divisive consideration of Scotland's place in the world. There, co-founder and former local Fay Young has paid affectionate tribute to his achievements as a 'linguist, translator, writer, editor, bon viveur, loyal and loving friend' [[bit.ly/FYScSc](https://www.bbc.com/news/scotland-65844444)].

A detailed obituary appeared in the *Guardian* at [[bit.ly/DGow](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/nov/04/david-gow-obituary)].—AM



Image: Fay Young.

Good aim, wrong place?

St Stephen's Theatre Company has applied to fix a commemorative brass plaque to one of the front piers of St Stephen's Church (25/05422/LBC). It would accompany a *Stolperstein* in the pavement adjacent, for which planning permission is not needed.

The 2 memorials would honour Jane Haining (1897–1944), a Church of Scotland missionary murdered by the Nazis at Auschwitz-Birkenau for protecting Jewish children in the Holocaust [<https://www.bbc.com/news/scotland-65844444>].

Edinburgh World Heritage is acting as SSTC's agent, and in Feb 2023 Edinburgh Council unanimously supported the installation of a *Stolperstein* to mark Haining's 'life, bravery and enduring legacy of compassion'.

Stolpersteine (literally 'stumbling thresholds') are 10cm concrete cubes bearing brass plates with the names and dates of victims of Nazi extermination or persecution.

They are positioned in 'the individual's last known place of freely chosen residence or work'. Haining attended her dedication service at St Stephen's in 1932 but is more usually associated with her home in Dunscore and final Budapest posting.

Although over 40k have been installed across Europe since 1992, *Stolpersteine* aren't without controversy. Critics sometimes say they're disrespectful and/or lacking context: [[bit.ly/Stprstn](https://www.bbc.com/news/scotland-65844444)].

At St Stephen's, the A3-sized plaque would add a little more information to the *Stolperstein* but would also compromise the A-listed façade. Balancing this equation of gain and loss is complicated. A decision is expected by 22 Dec.



Hogmanay and hurdy-gurdies

FROM THE SCOTSMAN (1 JAN 1825). Last night and this morning, *Hogmanay* and the new year lacked little in the usual demonstrations of joy. Before St Giles's, however, had proclaimed the noon of night, a refreshing shower had considerably thinned the streets, and rendered less lusty than usual the twelve o'clock spirit-stirring huzza of our hearty bottle-partizans.

We had some fears of at least a *rowe* betwixt the lower Irish and some of the town's tradesmen, in remembrance of casual antipathies which, as mentioned before, unfortunately existed between the Sons of St Andrew and St Patrick; but we are happy to say, that, up to our hour of publication (with the exception of the capture of some two or three muzzy denizens), no occurrence took place to disturb the general hilarity of the morning.

This circumstance may perhaps, in a great measure, be attributed to a timely supply of celestial liquid, and the previous excellent arrangements of our police establishment. [An additional 50 constables had been stationed that night in St John's St.]

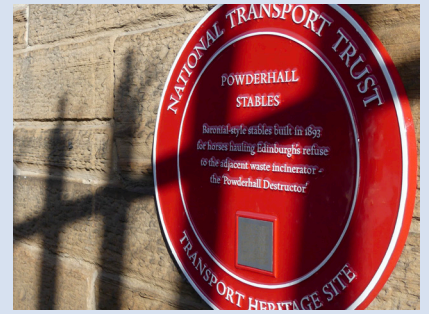
FROM THE CALEDONIAN MERCURY (1 JAN 1849). This morning brought in the year 1849, and with a quietness unexampled during the last half-century.

The drunken orgies with which this festival was wont to be ushered in have been gradually declining since the memorable New Year of 1812; and the peace and quiet of last night may be further attributed to *Hogmanay* falling on Sunday, and to the stringent clause, 136, of the new police act, which compels all drinking shops, &c. to be shut at 11 at night.

But as a solatium to the few revellers for the want of stronger stimulants, a great number of orange sellers set up their stalls in the High Street and elsewhere, about half-past twelve, and music was furnished by Italian hurdy-gurdies, &c. till a much later hour.



Briefly



The National Transport Trust has attached a commemorative Red Wheel to the side of B-listed Powderhall Stables on Broughton Rd, marking it as a Transport Heritage Site. Built in 1893, to a design by City Engineer John Cooper, the ground floor originally housed the horses who pulled rubbish carts across Edinburgh to an adjacent waste incineration plant. Alongside were associated saddler and smithy services. Upstairs was a hayloft. The central tower was offices.

The newly established Celestia restaurant at 18 Eyre Pl has won 'Best Indian Fine Dining in Scotland' at the Asian Curry Awards. Restaurateur Mohammed Abbas and daughter Arisha Abbas accepted a 3rd mark of recognition at the Asian Catering Federation event in London.

Spurtle understands 2 refurbished Gayfield Sq benches will return very soon. The 3rd will be relocated to Blenheim Pl.

A report to the Transport & Environment Cmte on 29 Jan will back a TRO preventing vehicular drop-offs and pick-ups in St James Sq (see Issue 354).

On 17 Nov, locals woke up to 'Palestine-Saltires' attached to lampposts on major routes throughout the area: 10 in Mansfield Pl, another 10 in Picardy Pl, at least 10 along Leith Walk and over a dozen on Leith St. They were placed by United in Resistance, an activist group which regards the flags as visible support for the Palestinian people and a riposte to the use of saltires by Scots opposed to refugees and immigrants. A Council spokesperson told Spurtle: 'Attachments to street furniture can only be made with the permission of the Council. These flags do not have such permission and will be removed in due course.'

Drummond Pl residents report repeated night-time drone activity in their back gardens. It's not clear who is responsible: investigative burglars, peeping perverts or GRU agents on weekend city-breaks. Police have been informed.

Figures released on 4 Nov show 99 out of 866 snags have now been resolved along the Trams to Newhaven route. A final road-safety audit for the route was conducted in Nov. We'll share its results when we have them.

In response to Council Planners' calls for additional information, New Town Qtr developers submitted 70 documents (25/01899/FUL). These mostly concern daylight/sunlight studies, amenity calculations, and provision of ground-floor commercial space. One local described making sense of them as 'an absolute bloody nightmare'. Meanwhile, neighbours complain of earth tremors caused by on-site piling.

Moreover ...



Gail 'The Legend' Mitchell, who served at the **Cask and Barrel** on Broughton St for 33 years, retired on 13 Nov. Her immediate plan is for a **wee holiday followed by some volunteering**. Husband Mitch was landlord here for 25 years before retiring when Caledonian Heritable took over. **We wish them both all the best.**

Throughout Nov, 'significant' emergency repairs to a leaking gas main caused the closure of **Rodney St** for southbound traffic. SGN initially evacuated locals but let them return after temporary repairs. **Seven excavations** were made, exposing the area not only to noise and congestion but also a variety of wholly unholy pongs.

Shane Carter (Issue 351) has emailed Tesco CEO Ken Murphy to complain about 'filth and squalor' (litter, tree detritus, fag ends) on the strip of land between the supermarket and **Broughton Rd**. An Executive Team member promised action. Carter, who has lodged a Stage 2 Complaint (Local Govt (Scotland) Act 2003) about Council shortcomings, campaigns for better **street-cleaning and waste services**. He says, 'I am becoming increasingly concerned at the frequency with which I find it necessary to request street cleaning services – services which should be systematically and routinely provided without the **Council Tax payer** needing to ask for them owing to satisfactory standards not being achieved.' He says official responses are **often non-existent, inaccurate or contemptuous**.

The unstaffed 9-bdrm **Adria House** aparthotel (a development in progress) proposes a 'dedicated destination' within the steep back garden of **11 Royal Ter** (25/05233/FUL). Comprising hot and cold water therapy, a **'sauna immersed in lush planting'**, external shower/cold plunge tub and sheltered relaxation lounge with loo, the **'self-contained one stop retreat'** would offer VIPs 'uninterrupted vistas' across the Firth of Forth. Keen-eyed Fifers and **sailors with telescopes** could equally enjoy uninterrupted views in the opposite direction. Neighbours objecting to **potential disruption and inappropriate materials** are backed by the New Town & Broughton Community Council.

Early last month, locals began reporting drug use and associated anti-social behaviour in **McDonald Rd** and surrounding streets. Some 13 complaints were made in under a week. A raid on an address followed, resulting in the **arrest and charging** of 2 people and recovery of a significant quantity of controlled drugs. **No further problems** have been reported since 10 Nov.

A drunken occultist? Strange scrawl on the **Stock Bridge** and even stranger explanations: [bit.ly/LWWD].

Spurtle Team: E. Brown, P. Cockburn, E. Dickie, C. Ellis, J. Hart, M. Hart, D. Hill, V. Kirby, A. McIntosh, S. Michael, M. Orr, W. Quinn, C. Roussot, E. Roussot, T. Smith, D. Sterratt, E. Taylor-Smith, D. Young.

Post: Broughton Spurtle, c/o The Yard, 61–3 Broughton Street, EH1 3RJ.

Printed by Edinburgh Copy Shop, 52 St Mary's Street



THE DRAWING ROOM
GENTLEMEN'S HAIRSTYLIST
23B DUNDAS STREET
TEL. 07565 208767

MON–FRI, 10AM–6PM; SAT, 10–3PM
BY APPOINTMENT OR WALK IN

Prices	
Haircut	£27
Clipper all over	£20
Back and side	£20
Beard trim	£10
Senior	£20
Boys 12 & under	£20
Ear & nose wax	£10

Ben Macpherson MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament
for Edinburgh Northern
and Leith Constituency

The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



As the local MSP for Edinburgh Northern and Leith Constituency my team and I are here to help.

I hold monthly Help & Advice Surgeries.

Get in touch for more details or if I can help.

Phone:
0131 600 0134

Email:
ben.macpherson.msp@parliament.scot

Promoted by Ben Macpherson MSP, 34 Constitution Street, Leith, Edinburgh, EH6 6RS
The costs of this publication have been met from parliamentary resources.
The SPCC is not responsible for the content of external websites.



Clear. Direct. Expert advice.

If you need advice from a **local** Scottish solicitor on

- Personal injury claims (100% no win, no fee)
- Employment law and Tribunal advice
- Civil litigation & Dispute resolution
- Property, landlord & tenant issues
- Debt recovery matters

Call us for a free initial consultation
0131 235 2426

www.stewartlegal.co.uk
Stewart Legal, Hudson House
8 Albany Street, Edinburgh EH1 3QB

Lorna Slater MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament
for Lothian Region

The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

You can contact me by:

✉ Lorna.Slater.MSP@parliament.scot

✉ MG.14 The Scottish Parliament, EH99 1SP

☎ 0131 348 6997

You can find me on:

📷 @lornagreens

🐦 @lornaslater.bsky.social

✂ @lornaslater

f @LornaSlaterMSP



LEITH CENTRAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

We're here to represent your views – from planning to clean streets and green spaces.



Follow us online, come along to a meeting, or email us directly at secretary@leithcentralcc.co.uk

NEXT MEETING AT
7pm ON 19th JANUARY

Foyso Choudhury MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Lothian Region

The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba



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:

☎ 0131 348 6761

✉ Foyso.Choudhury.MSP@parliament.scot

f @FoysoChoudhuryMSP

🐦 @FoysoChoudhury

🌐 foysolchoudhury.co.uk

The costs of this publication have been met from parliamentary resources. The SPCC is not responsible for the content of other external sites.



Edinburgh's only multi award winning health store.
Since 1904.

Hanover Healthfoods

www.hanoverhealth.co.uk
40 Hanover St | 0131 225 4291