

# Spurtle



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**BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free**

**January  
2012**

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## RBS TO CONSULT LOCALS ON REDEVELOPMENT

Royal Bank of Scotland want to redevelop property at 7, 11–13 Eyre Terrace (Ref. 03575/FUL; *Breaking news*, 21.11.11). It will unveil detailed proposals at a pre-application notification consultation in Stockbridge Library on 11 January, 2.00–8.00pm.

Short-term plans are to demolish decrepit-looking properties on the terrace, and the outbuildings behind, and to install temporary landscaping.

So far, some locals are arguing in general for any longer-term redevelopment to recognise the area's shift away from its light-industrial past, and to consider a scheme like that on the corner of Eyre Place and Dundas Street with residential and retail spaces. They are keen that any new building should be sympathetic to the much improved King George V Park adjacent.

The Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland has appealed for the properties to be spared and given new purpose. John Lawson, curator of archaeology at City of Edinburgh Council Archaeology Service, says the unlisted buildings are of 'local archaeological/historic importance in terms of Edinburgh's late Victorian/Early 20th century commercial and industrial heritage'. However, whilst it would be *preferable* for the buildings to be preserved in situ, he says it would be *acceptable* to demolish them so long as a proper survey and record were made first.

Given the site's previous uses (including pie making and laundry services), a site survey will be undertaken to check for contamination.



## IS 'TESCO TAX' THE BEST WAY FORWARD?

Northern Ireland's Minister of Finance Sammy Wilson is advancing a 'large retail levy' on stores with a rateable value of £500K or more. Under his proposal, these would pay an extra 15 per cent on their current rates bills.

The sum raised (estimated at £5m–£7m per year) would fund a 20 percent rate relief for small businesses with rateable values of £5K–10K. He also proposes giving new occupants of empty shop premises a one-year rate reduction of 50 per cent.

Major retailers have responded with outraged squeals and menacing predictions of doom. No surprise there, then. *Spurtle* would welcome Holyrood's urgent attention to measures similarly aimed at preserving and promoting small, independent retailers in Scotland.

We thank Greener Leith for drawing this article in the *Irish Times* (20.12.11) to our attention: [<http://bit.ly/tszm46>].

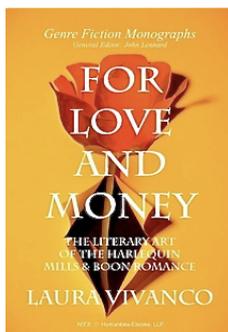
## BENEFITS OF MORE FIBRE

By the time you read this, parts of Broughton served by the Waverley Exchange may have access to superfast fibre broadband (SFB). Those parts served by the Leith and Granton Exchanges are provisionally expected to be connected by the end of 2012. There are currently no SFB plans for the Rose Street Exchange.

SFB allows computer users to access larger amounts of online information more quickly (e.g. TV, Facebook and real-time games), and helps multiple users for the same account 'work' simultaneously better. It makes possible upload speeds of up to 15Mb and download speeds of up to 40Mb.

The upgrade is British Telecom's £2.5 billion response to the UK government's ambition to have the European Union's best SFB network by 2015. It is what lies behind the recent proliferation of broadband cabinets around this part of the city. To find out whether your particular property will get SFB, go to your current broadband supplier's website and use the line-checker.

## IN DEFENCE OF ROMANCE



Local resident Laura Vivanco is an unrepentant enthusiast for Harlequin Mills & Boon novels, and last month her scholarly defence of them – *For Love and Money* – was published in print and electronic formats.

'Having spent a great deal of time reading HM&B romances, I would argue that many are well-written, skilfully crafted works which can and do engage the minds as well as the emotions of their readers, and a few are small masterpieces,' she writes.

The genre is in fact a very old one, traceable to the myths of antiquity. Very old, too, is the critical disdain with which such stories have often been met, not least by people who have never read one. For more information and details of where to find a copy, see *Breaking news* (16.12.11).

## Briefly

**Robert Barnes** is chuffed to be addressing **Broughton History Society's** next session on 9 Jan. (Drummond CHS). His topic will be 'A Capital System. The Railways of Edinburgh & Leith in the 19th Century. Selected Images'.

**Santa's Broughton location** in our Issue 201 photo competition was outside the **RN and RM Club** on Broughton Rd. Well done **Stuart Gundry**, whose name emerged first from the shooglie hat. 'We can't really complain about his continued presence on our road,' observes Mr Gundry. 'After all, he needs to find out who has been naughty and who has been nice. However, he does remind me of the "Big Brother is watching you" billboards from *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'

On 22 Dec. CEC voted to shut the much-loved but under-used **Leith Waterworld** (LW), despite a wave of protest. *Spurtle* has many warm memories of the facility, and of the **occasional, unexpected items** found floating in it. Unfortunately, LW required a **c.£400K p.a. subsidy**, and if kept open would have left a **£5.6m shortfall** in funding arrangements for the refurbished Commonwealth Pool. It closes on 8 Jan.

**Braewell Gallery** on Dundas St has closed, almost exactly a year after it opened. We will miss its **lively exhibitions**, and its welcome initiative to **beautify empty shopfronts**. The organisers will retain a Glasgow presence.

**The New Town and Broughton Community Council (NTBCC)** is eager to recruit new members, particularly residents from its **Broughton and Bellevue** purlieus. Next meeting: 6 Feb.

**City Centre police** are calling on locals to report attempted break-ins **even when nothing has been pinched**. Reports help them to spot nefarious patterns. Tel. 311 3131 also for crime prevention advice.

On display in the window of **Duncan & Reid** at Tanfield, last month, was Jeremy Purseglove's history and natural history of wetlands entitled *Taming the Flood*. Reviewed in the Feb. 1990 *New Scientist*, it was described as 'an **impassioned plea to engineers** to stop draining marshes and straightening rivers, and to make the countryside look lovely again'. **Thank goodness for progress** ('Chop stopped ...').

Fergus Smith, proprietor and genius loci at **Second Edition** on Howard St is well-versed in the vagaries of **second-hand and antiquarian bookselling**. However, even he was taken aback recently: 'In the last week, I've sold a biography of a famous Scottish philosopher, an illustrated edition of *The 39 Steps*, and an early issue of *Annals of the Parish*. The customers' names? David Hume, John Buchan and John Galt! Is this a new phenomenon, perhaps **nominative bibliodeterminism**?'

## New take on old features

Don't miss Omar Arráez's huge, hyper-realistic and three-dimensional *Paper Portraits* at Axolotl Gallery, 35 Dundas St until 25 Jan..

*Humane and humbling celebrations of the ageing face, they are best seen up close but you can also find them at: [www.omararraez-art.blogspot.com].*

*Could there, we wonder, be any connection between Arráez and some extraordinary street-art on Leith Walk around 2 months ago? See posting on 5 November at: [www.greenerleith.org].*



## Chop stopped at Canonmills

Campaigners fighting to retain trees during and after flood-prevention works at Canonmills claimed victory last month after City of Edinburgh Council made concessions (*Breaking news*, 18.12.11).

Five of the 11 trees threatened with felling will definitely be saved. Engineering solutions will be sought to safeguard another two. Four trees by the adjacent tenement's gable end will still have to go.

Work on this section of the Water of Leith has now been suspended for around two months while an amended planning consent is obtained.

David Anderson (Director of Planning) offered his apologies for 'the initial communications through the contractors with residents which could have been handled better'. *Spurtle* thinks this rather understates CEC's shortcomings.

Coincidentally, the news follows CEC's publication of a draft 'Natural Heritage Strategy' for consultation. According to the City's Principal Planner, Frances Jervie, Edinburgh's distinctive natural environment – including locally valued trees – 'forms a unique asset to be protected and enhanced'.

Director and Principal, it seems, need to spend more time talking to each other.

The document can be viewed at [<http://bit.ly/vVGxIW>] or ordered in printed form from the Natural Heritage Section at Waverley Court. All comments should be submitted by 31 January 2012.

## Wee item of correspondence

Dear *Spurtle*,

There have been two applications in recent weeks for the demolition of the public conveniences at the top of Cathedral Lane, to be replaced by an electricity sub-station for the sacred trams.

A public protest on the lines of a mob of elderly people urinating on the doors of the City Chambers could show public anger but would only lead to a £40 fine and placement on the Sex Offenders List. So we must seek alternatives.

There are bushes outside St Mary's Cathedral but I cannot see Cardinal O'Brien allowing this.

The John Lewis store has two beautiful toilets: one on the first floor and another on the third floor. The snag about this is that the escalators may be damaged by water coming from potential toilet-seekers not quite reaching them in time.

I cannot recall any mention in the *Spurtle* of this disaster.

Yours sincerely,

D.R. Watt (Bellevue, 16.12.11)

[*Spurtle* addressed the issue online in *Breaking news* (3.9.11; 14.12.11), but failed to fully visualise the escalating implications.]

## 2011: Some *Spurtle* minutiae remembered

1. January: Explain 'foot yashmaks'.
2. February: How did an illusionary Broughton feature worldwide?
3. March: What was 'another term for caffeine deprivation' according to whom?
4. April: Which ironic Jacobite celebrations were proposed for Great Stuart Street?
5. May: Weather improved, but can you explain 'Lothian Lolly'?
6. June: *Spurtle* lamented the demise of a short-lived but exemplary protector – who?
7. July: What inspired images of dungeons, gondolas and Venetian lagoons?
8. August: What's the connection between trouble in Libya and trouble in Hopetoun Crescent?
9. September: Offers over £570K – which local landmark went on sale?
10. October: Adult education: what a difference an *r* makes. How?
11. November: LCVF – Why was less more?
12. December: Green thoughts on a green shade ... where?

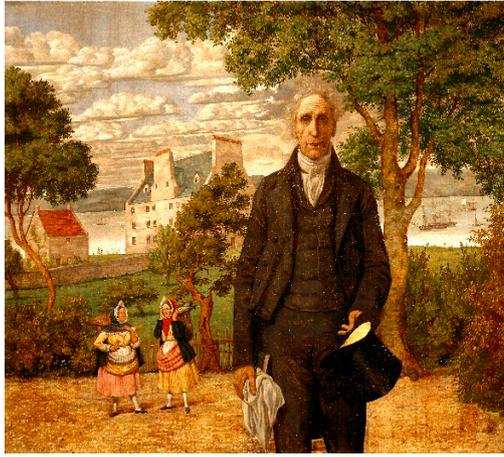
*A £15 book token is on offer for the discerning reader with the most right answers whose name is prised first by Father Time from the shooglie hat. Please send your entries to the email address on p.1 or postbox on p.4.*

## Out of the shadows ...

One of the many felicities of the revitalised Scottish National Portrait Gallery is welcoming old friends and discovering new ones. A special welcome should be accorded to the extraordinary portrait of Sir Alexander Morison by Richard Dadd. Previously, this was virtually secreted in a dimly lit upper-floor gallery among images of the largely wan and the bland. Now it has emerged from the shadows and hangs in the Monument Gallery on Floor 2. Dadd is celebrated chiefly as the painter of themes with a fairyland setting. He was confined to 'Bedlam' and subsequently to Broadmoor Hospital for most of his adult life (1817–86), for killing his father, being deemed of 'unsound mind'.

Sir Alexander Morison was an enlightened consultant to Bethlem Asylum in Surrey, and this wonderfully sympathetic painting is the only one by Dadd with a Scottish association. Morison stands in front of his Anchorfield estate in Newhaven with a prospect of the Firth of Forth and two charming, miniscule fishwives behind him. It was painted in 1852 when Morison had retired from Bethlem, aged 73, not long after his wife's death.

He stares directly at us, with a careworn, resigned look as if bidding adieu to the world. The composition has a slightly skewed, otherworldly aspect, but is imbued with a gentle serenity very far from Dadd's inner torments which perhaps Dr Morison helped to alleviate. It is a tribute by a remarkable, deeply troubled artist to an equally remarkable physician, both of whom sought enlightenment in their impassioned disciplines. We salute the Portrait Gallery for bringing this luminous and moving work to the wider attention which it richly deserves. *JRM [N.B. Readers are warmly invited to write about any SNPG holdings they would like to highlight.]*



## Possibilities

After a week of heavy snow our shrubbery has begun to show the strain, climbing ivy and choisya bowed under the undue weight, the Japanese cherry with its tonsure of white; while the tubs in their woolly hats provide a note of incongruity. But what most inspires us, despite the darkness beneath, are the green shoots confidently thrusting upwards towards the light.

Stewart Conn

*We are indebted to Stewart Conn, Edinburgh's first Makar or poet laureate, for contributing this new poem to the Spurtle, and sowing the seeds for another year of stirring.*

## Shared gardens mean a lot

Fancy a new hobby or helping out a bit in the community? asks *Edinburgh Garden Partners' Daisy Muir*. EGP is a charity matching people with garden space they don't use to people who would like to grow fruit and vegetables but can't get an allotment.

For some, a garden can become a real burden (perhaps due to age or ill health), but by sharing it they not only see it flourish again but can enjoy its fresh produce, meet a new face and have some maintenance tasks done (e.g. grass cutting).

Volunteer gardeners benefit by learning new skills through horticultural training, meeting new people, sharing tips and ideas, and helping someone out.

Matches are carefully managed, with volunteers providing references first. An agreement is then drawn up, outlining how the arrangement will work, and a member of EGP staff gives support all the way.

If you live in the north of the city and want to get involved, contact Daisy at [daisy@edinburghgardenpartners.org.uk] or Tel. 07901 675 184. For more information see [www.edinburghgardenpartners.org.uk].

## Briefly

As reported in *Breaking news* (6.12.11) last month, **Sainsbury's** have been granted planning permission for alterations to a property on **Howe Street** and will open a store there soon. **Very regrettably**, an administrative error by the NTBCC meant their expression of locals' objections was not considered by the Planning Subcommittee. However, NTBCC *has* objected to the application for housing and commercial development on **Beaverhall Rd** (*Breaking news*, 2.11.11). It feels changes made since the pre-application consultation would **negatively affect** the amenity of residents in the old tenement there.

The A-listed **Royal Scots Club** at 32 Abercromby Place has lost its appeal against a decision by CEC Planners not to allow the **erection of 4 antennae**. On 6 Dec. the Scottish Ministers' Reporter said the additions would **spoil the appearance of the chimneys**, and the appellants had not made enough effort to find alternative sites.

Council-owned land on **Bellevue Rd** to the west of Broughton Primary School's lower playground (*Extras*, 1.3.11) has been sold to a mystery buyer. The headteacher still hopes to negotiate **part use of it as a garden**. Meanwhile, the former High School between BPS and McDonald Rd **remains on the market**.

**The wonders of science.** Locals last month discussed how better to police Broughton Place, Dublin, Forth and Union Streets. All suffer rowdy behaviour in the early hours when **hugely refreshed** folk spill from the fleshpots of Picardy Place. Ill-lit corners apparently encourage various other outpourings, so much so that some residents now want to see '**motion-sensitive**' lighting fitted.

The surprise lunchtime appearance of around **25 police and multiple pandas** outside the Cask and Barrel on Sat. 10 Dec. – some with dogs, others with alarming-looking bags on their roofs – **was not an armed siege**, as locals first feared. More prosaically, this was an intelligence-led operation aimed at identifying 'risk supporters' connected to that day's **Hibs v. Rangers game**. Hibs lost 0:2.

**Gusts of wind** reaching up to 102 mph caused widespread damage across Broughton on 3 January. In **Inverleith Park**, 2 rugby posts were bent over, and – incredibly – this tree snapped at the base.



## Moreover ...



Has anyone else noticed this 'seal' in a Broughton front garden? We're not sure whether it is a **naturally occurring shape in wood or stone**, or has been crafted by human hand. However, it is certainly beautiful and its fluid lines are **eloquently suggestive** of the real thing. We will make further enquiries of the owner before specifying its location.

Not the best start to 2012 for The **French Fancies** on London St. Late-night revellers have for the 3rd time pulled the basement café/patisserie's signage from the wall, this time also stealing it **despite it having no resale or re-use value**. If caught, the perpetrators can expect a tart response.

**Unlikely but true:** a concerned reader really has contacted the *Spurtle* about a **sheep on a dog-lead seen being walked down Annandale St** by 3 teenagers, on Christmas Eve between 10pm and 11pm. They were, apparently, a bit rough and ready looking – **'not the 'usual type' of person you'd expect to see with a sheep'** ... on Annandale St. Despite extensive enquiries, we have so far received only one lurid but unreliable corroboration.

*Spurtle* understands CEC have earmarked an **undisclosed sum** to purchase an **uncertain quantity of unspecified play equipment** for King George V Park at **some time** before the end of the financial year. We offer hearty congratulations and an **as-yet-to-be-disclosed number** of cheers. When winter finally comes to an end, look out for exactly **6,000 snowdrops** planted by the **Friends of KGVSYP**.

Hats off to staff and customers at Tesco's on Broughton Rd who **donated £965** during a fundraising weekend last month. The sum went to **Alzheimer Scotland**.

A **Shaw's Terrace** resident has lost his appeal to Scottish Ministers to be allowed to retain a satellite dish on the B-listed building. Among other reasons, the Reporter found the dish: did indeed need listed building consent; was an **incongruous appendage** which did not preserve the building, its setting or features of special architectural or historic interest. He was unpersuaded by the appellant's argument that removal of the dish would **contravene his human rights** under Article 10 of the European Convention.

**Malcolm Chisholm MSP**  
Edinburgh North and Leith



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Fax: 0131 557 6781

Saturday surgeries:  
Leith Library, Ferry Road: 9am.  
Royston Wardieburn Community  
Centre, Pilton Drive North: 11 am.

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**Friday advice sessions:**  
4.00pm **Stockbridge Library**,  
no appointment necessary;  
5.00pm **5 Croall Place**;  
other surgeries throughout the  
constituency – phone for details

**Spurtle Team:** John Dickie, MF, Ali George, Maria Hart, George Hosey, Alan McIntosh, John Ross Maclean, Graeme Robertson, David Sterratt.  
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