

Spurtle



Find us at: www.broughtonspurtle.org.uk

**December
2012**

No 213

Tel: 556 4848

spurtle@hotmail.co.uk

BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

SHRUB PLACE DISRUPTION – THE END IN SIGHT

Progress – caterpillar-slow and zig-zagging – appears to have been made on the disruptive use of land at Shrub Place for 'materials recycling' (Ref. 12/00679/ECOU; Issues 210–12; *Breaking news*, 16.8.12; 1.11.12).

City officials now agree the change of use from car parking should not have gone ahead without Planning consent.

They will enforce this decision and work on the site will cease, *unless* the contractor Crummock lodges a retrospective Planning application first.

Spurtle understands that officials are unlikely to look kindly upon any such application, but a review would buy Crummock a few weeks (and of course prolong slightly the misery of nearby residents).

The exact direction and timing of these alternative processes were unclear when we went to press, but the eventual outcome appears to represent an achievement for Leith Central Community Council, determined locals and their various elected and unelected champions. This may not be the end. It may *not even be the beginning of the end*. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.

Meanwhile, Logie Green residents report damage to pavements by HGVs as the former Vogue gap-site is used as a builder's yard ...

UNITED IN FRUSTRATION AT SHRUBHILL HOUSE DELAYS

Pre-application public 'consultation' on Unite Group PLC's plans for Shrubhill House on 20 November barely merited the term.

There was little new about which to ask or comment, since the proposals displayed were just the same old ones previously consented for 260 student bedrooms above 2 shops and 3 food-and-drink outlets (Ref. 06/05371/FUL).

Really at issue were: (a) Unite's statutory obligation to hold the event in advance of (b) Unite applying for a further 5 years in which to begin construction.

But does Unite intend to build? Strong indications from insiders suggest the firm has found a buyer for the site so long as it has planning permission. If that is true, then this exercise in planning democracy was, arguably, just a staging post in Unite's bid to cut losses on property expensively acquired (allegedly for £6m) at the top of the market.

Such speculative property acquisition and sale is disparagingly termed 'land banking', especially when plots remain empty for years, blighting neighbourhoods, in order to maximise profits. The Greens say a Land Value Tax on such vacant assets would discourage the practice.

'When the city needs more affordable housing, especially near the city centre, it's a crying shame that the Shrubhill site has been unused for so long,' says Leith Walk's Green councillor Maggie Chapman. She finds it 'totally unacceptable'. However, she also urges the Council and community to find imaginative alternative uses for land when the economic context makes

some developments unlikely: play areas, gardens, skate parks, for example

She is hopeful, 'perhaps naively' she says, that something about the use of vacant land will be included in the Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill on which Holyrood is currently working.



£135, BUT I'M ROBBIN' MASEL'



Barbara Franc's 'Robin' is one of the seasonal highlights at Union Gallery's *Christmas Exhibition* this month. The show, featuring works by various artists, will run until 23 December at 45 Broughton St. See: [<http://bit.ly/9PR8Be>].

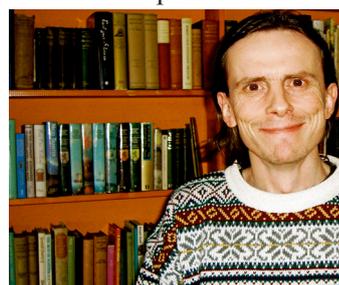
END OF AN ERA AS CANONMILLS SHOP GOES

Second Edition, the second-hand and antiquarian bookshop on Howard Street, is to close later this month.

The business – established in 1971 by Maureen Smith, taken on by her husband William and latterly by son Fergus – will shut for the last time on 24 December. Some stock will continue to be traded online at [www.oldscottishbooks.com].

Fergus Smith – a Broughton resident who has grown up with the business – confesses to feeling somewhat traumatised by his decision, but is optimistic about a new (and he hopes more profitable) venture involving genealogical research and related bespoke tourism.

Second Edition – its staff, stock and customers – have featured many times in these pages over the years (e.g. Issues 173, 206). Send us your own memories of the shop and we will publish them.



LEITH WALK IMPROVEMENTS – NEW IMPROVED PLANS?

The Council has begun a new round of consultations on its latest improvement plan for Leith Walk and surrounds.

Initiatives include: road and pavement resurfacing, repositioning of wheelie bins, planting, cycle lanes and segregated cycleways at Picardy Place and London Road roundabouts, a better pedestrian crossing at the junction with Annandale Street, and removal of excess signage. At the Transport Committee on 23 November, a further £500K for the scheme was pledged.

Proposals can be viewed and responded to at McDonald Rd Library (see *Events*, 3.12.12), or online at [www.edinburgh.gov.uk/leithimprovements]. You have until 13 January 2013 to respond. *Spurtle* urges you to stay involved, even if you have taken part at earlier stages and feel you have nothing much new to say.

Briefly

The next meeting of the **Broughton History Society** is the Christmas Soirée on 10 Dec.

Coco Chocolate UK (comprising branches in Bruntsfield and Broughton St, and a kitchen/school in Roslin) is for sale at offers over £150K. **Rebecca Knights-Kerswell**, who founded the business in 2004, is leaving to concentrate on the firm's very successful **growth in Australia**. It currently has two shops and a school at **Kirribilli and Mosman** in Sydney, from which city she originates.

Leith Neighbourhood Partnership are keen on improving maintenance and developing **Pilrig Park**, but want greater public input. To express your views or help set up a Friends group, attend Leith Central Community Council's meeting at **McDonald Rd Library** on 17 Dec, 7pm or email them at: [contactleithcentralcc@gmail.com].

After 4 years (Issue 166), **Brian Rafferty** is to close the **Broughton St Bookshop** when No. 44's lease comes up at the end of Dec. He is looking forward to a **new job in retailing**, possibly in the same geographical area.

The New Town & Broughton Community Council has joined numerous locals in opposing a proposed 2-storey dwelling on **Barony Place** (Ref. 12/03470/FUL; *Breaking news*, 10.10.12; 29.10.12). They say the **'rectangular black brick box ... does not pay even remote lip service to the Council's admirable Mews Policy'**.

TG Tip 2 – Bin your television. Ban wintry evenings in front of the box and you will have **plenty time to cook proper food and finally start on that exercise programme.** And you'll avoid the **adverts for junk food, too.** Try it for Dec and Jan, and as an added bonus miss all the festive rubbish. **Can you last till Feb?**

Marianne Wheelaghan's new novel **Food of Ghosts** is a crime thriller set in the Pacific [ISBN 978-0-9566144-38]. *Spurtle* interviewed the **Pilrig author** about Life, Death and the dark side of **Paradise** in *Breaking news* (19.11.12)

This pumpkin survived Halloween to spook Scotland Street residents well into November. Credit where credit's due: who made it?



Not waving but drowning

Only two of Antony Gormley's six '6 Times' figures, unveiled in 2010, are still in place.

Lamentably, all four statues originally mounted in the Water of Leith – including those at Bonnington, Powderhall and Stockbridge – are now in storage after repeated collapses before the current. Review of the tilting mechanism is under way, as is discussion with the artist about possible repositioning out of the water. It does not bode well.

Spurtle reported exclusively at *Breaking news* (5.11.12). Photo courtesy of: [http://bit.ly/PTG9Qe].



Knight highlights PAC flaws

The Scottish Civic Trust met on 30 October to discuss the Art of Community Engagement.

New Town & Broughton Community Council Planning Convener John Knight tackled Government minister Derek Mackay MSP there on the subject of pre-application consultation (PAC) procedures. He highlighted two flaws: (a) developers' presentation of plans so vague that locals cannot understand them; (b) developers making major changes *after* consultation without further reference. (The latter can wrong-foot locals and community councils if they must switch at short notice from supporters to objectors.)

'I told Mr Mackay that I had been charged by the Edinburgh Association of Community Councils to present a case to the Scottish Government for consolidation of the 2006 Act,' Knight later reported.

'He promised to give it his consideration while making it clear that the 2006 Act is here to stay.'

Yellow trikes explained

Readers have asked about the fleeting presence of distinctive yellow trikes passing from Canonmills up to the top of Broughton Street or down Dundas Street to destinations unknown.

The four, German-built 1600cc beasts belong to Edinburgh-based Trike Tours Scotland Ltd, and transport visitors at (from) £55 per person per hour on chauffeur-driven 'unique personalised tour experiences' about the capital and far beyond. They sound great.

Trike Tours provide helmets (with hygienic head liners), leather jackets, gloves and waterproof clothing. On trips lasting more than 40 minutes, helmets have an integrated head-set to help passengers yell final farewells at each other. 'Alternatively, you can listen to the theme tune from *Braveheart*.'

Clients are afterwards treated with tea, coffee, shortbread and whisky. Learn more at: [bit.ly/xNd3K8].

IT boost for Education

City of Edinburgh Council last month signed a £4.9m deal with British Telecom to upgrade information technology (IT) across its Education service.

In 2013, 50,000 users will receive: bandwidth upgrades from January; new computers in the spring/summer; cloud-based storage and access to WIFI by summer 2013. The last IT upgrade for Education was in 2006/7, and by all accounts the system has been creaking over recent months.



The Council's intentions are a **re**laudable: to personalise learning, and embed staff and students' everyday

technology skills flexibly in and beyond the classroom.

However, it remains to be seen whether City officials have correctly identified users' priorities, and broken with recent form by competently negotiating a major contract.

Local firms are up for prizes

As you read this, one of two Broughton businesses may have secured a prestigious Glenfiddich Spirit of Scotland Award.

Gustavo Pardo of Broughton Street's Artisan Roast, and Peter Jackson, Dirk Douglas and Patricia Stephen, founders of Canonmills' Earthy, have all been nominated in recognition of services to food and drink.

The prize comes (or does not) as Artisan Roast launch a new website detailing their latest range of coffees. A source reveals that one, from Gatamboya at the foot of Mount Kenya, is pleasantly reminiscent of 'pink grapefruit and raspberry jam'.

Meanwhile, Earthy – established only in 2008, is enjoying its rapid success. It now has three branches across Edinburgh and supports over 200 small-scale farmers and artisan food producers.



Art's complex, and so is reporting it: a correction

In Issue 212 (p.1) we expressed our understanding that Scott Mitchell, the man behind the new Beaverhall Art Studios, was also behind Art's Complex on London Road. A spokesperson for the latter has since set us straight.

Art's Complex is an educational trust and Scottish charity, 'founded to bring the benefit of artistic practice to those in Edinburgh that would benefit from such a project: we cater to a great cross-section of Edinburgh society ...

'Let me emphasise: Scott Mitchell never has been, is not presently and never will be "behind" art's complex [sic] ... except for in his forward thinking perhaps!'

TIDE

On that sinuous passage from infancy and youth's buoyancy through middle life to advanced years, the one certainty is a gathering of momentum consistent with time's flow – something scarcely uppermost in my mind as the trout I'm playing draws me downstream till rocked by the tidal undertow I fight to retain my balance: hard to know where the river ends and the sea begins.

Stewart Conn

This poem is taken from Stewart Conn's collection *Estuary*, recently published by Mariscat Press, ISBN 978 0 946588 63 3.

Briefly



Photo courtesy of glaciemps.

On 6 Nov, *Spurtle* Twitter follower @geckogirl61 reported the return of a flock of 50–60 Waxwings to Annandale Street: a sure sign that winter is here in earnest. These fearless and rather bohemian-looking birds (*Bombycilla garrulus*) usually visit from Oct–Mar, preferring Broughton back-greens to the snow and crime novel-laden conifers of Scandinavia.

Life Story has opened at **53 London Street** (formerly Moviebank). Run by husband-and-wife designers and a **dachshund**, it is 'home to a carefully edited collection of beautiful, affordable and stylish **fashion and lifestyle goodies** from around the globe'. Meanwhile, next door, **Mezz** will reopen this month as **The Bellevue** (its old name) after major refurbishment.

A sister organisation to Northumberland St's Gallery on the Corner has opened on **Hill St**, where **The Café on the Corner** now runs on weekdays from 7.30am–3.30pm and serves, among other things, beverages from **Artisan Roast** and the offputtingly named **Wee Tea Company**. An **Autism Ventures** social enterprise, the café 'helps adults with autism to realise their potential by giving them opportunities to learn new skills in a real working environment'.

Mr Neil C. McLeod: you generously subscribed to the *Spurtle* last month, enclosing a **cheque but no delivery address**. Please drop us a line.

Mark Lazarowicz, MP attended the annual Remembrance Day event at Leith Community Treatment Centre (CTC) on 11 Nov. This succeeded **Leith Hospital**, one of whose wings was erected after the Great War as Leith's **imaginative alternative** to a more conventional war memorial.

Spurtle learns that Council Planners are again pressing Top Shop about when they will restore the iconic **Forsyth's Globe Finial** at 30 Princes Street (Issues 206, 209). Disappointing rumours suggest that a **glass-reinforced plastic** replica may replace the original.

The **Autumn Term** for state schools in Edinburgh ends on **Thurs 20 Dec**. Pupils' **Spring Term** begins on **Tues 8 Jan 2013**.

Barony Street reels at new arrival

The Scots Music Group (SMG) is an Edinburgh-based charity running traditional music classes, ceilidhs, informal sessions and related social events across the capital.

Last month they moved their small HQ into offices at the Glasite Meeting House on Barony Street, but their new home could also become a new venue for the Edinburgh folk scene.

SMG's first event here was on 1 December: a 'singfest' led by former East Claremont Street resident Christine Kydd, and run in association with Hands Up for Trad and Education Scotland's *Scotland's Songs* event.

Development worker Steve Byrne (also a musician and Broughton Rd resident, pictured) hopes more will follow, praising the main hall for its reverb which he describes as 'sympathetic, beautiful and solid, especially for voices'.

The SMG began over 20 years ago, originally as part of the Council's Community Education programme. It now boasts around 350 members and has two paid members of staff. Mostly it relies on volunteers to help students take traditional music back into their communities.

Its core aims include: creating a critical relationship of respect and status for Scots music, song and dance; building a repertoire in the Scots idiom referencing past, present and future; encouraging and maintaining the oral and aural transmission of the Scots tradition; and fostering connections with the traditions, music and dance of other cultures. To find out more, visit [www.scotsmusic.org].

Iain MacPhail – part of local 'souped-up ceilidh band' Whisky Kiss – trusts Broughton will take the new arrival to its heart. 'There's been a huge revival in traditional music in recent years, leading to some real innovations and developments in Scotland, and the SMG have played an important part in that'.



Ghostly fragments from Forth Street's past

On the north side of Forth Street, at the end with a bow towards Union Street, stands No. 28. On its façade, some ghostly lettering may be discerned.

'RENNIE' is clearly visible, followed by fragmentary letters which might be 'MANUFACTURER'. The 1910 Post Office Street Directory lists 'RENNIE'S LEAD SYNDICATE Ltd' here, with 'SOCIALIST LABOUR PARTY and PRESS' at the same address. It also records 'William C. Rennie BSc, consulting engineer, 28 Forth Street; house at 30 Broughton Place', and by 1934–5 he had moved to 56 Albany Street. This firm prospered until at least 1970, with the office at No. 28 and the main manufacturing business at 14 Union Street. Nearby is one of two surviving Victorian gas lamp-posts (Issue 194).

In their magisterial *The Buildings of Scotland*, John Gifford et al. extol this section (Nos 12–30) of the street, which was the first to be built and is well preserved 'despite some mansard attics'. No. 28 was built by James Sadin, architect, and finished in 1803, while the entire street was the inspired creation of Robert Burn (Issues 203–4).

Forth Street is embellished with many of the New Town's finest doorpieces, with flanking ionic columns and splendid fanlight arches, of which Gifford rightly judges No. 26 to be the 'most handsome' and grand. *JRM*

Moreover ...



Pictured above is a detail from 'Tina's Twilight', one of **Anita Inverarity's** character illustrations in whimsical settings inspired by the Scottish landscape. Her exhibition – *Quirky Quines and Other Stories* – continues at **The Gallery on the Corner** (34 Northumberland St) until 6 Jan 2013.

Welcome **Carolyn Baxter** to **41 London St** (next to the French Fancies)! Baxter will sell her own-label, affordable designer dresses (as featured on TV) and beauty items – ideal for **big hair needs and party frocks**.

Broughton Primary School has earned a coveted **Green Flag Award** from the environmental charity **Keep Scotland Beautiful**. See *Breaking news* (27.11.12) for details.

New research from Edinburgh Napier University's **Institute for Informatics and Digital Innovation** highlights Scottish community councils' low profile [<http://bit.ly/UhV21j>]. Leith Central CC is an exception, with updated website [<http://bit.ly/JMaPi4>] and new twitter feed [[@leithcentralcc](http://twitter.com/leithcentralcc)].

The *Spurtle* team wish all our readers, writers, subscribers, advertisers and distributors a very **merry Christmas and a happy New Year**. Issue 214 will appear early in January.

Scottish community councils ...



too low a profile?

Spurtle Team: J. Dickie, MF, A. George, M. Hart, F. Harvey, G. Hosey, A. McIntosh, J. R. Maclean, D. Sterratt, E. Taylor-Smith. Post: Spurtle, c/o Narcissus Flowers, 87 Broughton St, Edinburgh EH1 3RJ.

Malcolm Chisholm MSP Edinburgh North and Leith



Constituency Office:
5 Croall Place, Leith Walk, EH7 4LT
Tel: 0131 558 8358
Fax: 0131 557 6781

Saturday surgeries:
Leith Library, Ferry Road: 10am.
Royston Wardieburn Community Centre, Pilton Drive North: 12 noon.

Email: Malcolm.Chisholm.msp@scottish.parliament.uk

Marco Biagi MSP Edinburgh Central



Constituency Office:
77 Buccleuch Street, EH8 9LS
0131 668 3642

Surgeries:
Every Monday 5pm: Constituency Office

2nd Monday of the month:
11am-12noon St Bride's Centre
1pm-2pm Stockbridge Library

NB. No Surgeries on Public Holidays.

Email: marco.biagi.msp@scottish.parliament.uk



Alison Johnstone MSP for Lothian Region



On the 1st and 3rd Monday of the month during term time I hold a surgery for Lothian residents at the Scottish Parliament between 11am and 1pm.

Please call to book a surgery appointment or to arrange another time and venue that is convenient for you.

Contact me on 0131 348 6421
Alison.Johnstone.msp@scottish.parliament.uk

Broughton

Property Management

Thinking of Letting your Property?

See your local agent
We always need property to let

info@broughtonproperty.co.uk

0131-478-7222

61-63 Broughton Street
Edinburgh, EH1 3RJ.



Mark Lazarowicz MP for Edinburgh North and Leith



Constituency Office:
5 Croall Place, Leith Walk, EH7 4LT
Tel: 0131 557 0577
Fax: 0131 557 5759

mark@marklazarowicz.org.uk
www.marklazarowicz.org.uk

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

New Town/Broughton Community Council

The Community Council represents the views of local residents to Edinburgh City Council

Next Meeting:

Monday 3 Dec.

at 7.30pm

Broughton St Mary's Parish Church, Bellevue Crescent

secretary@ntbcc.org.uk

AM DECORATING

Your local painter & decorator **Alastair McAlpine**
Tel: 0131-556 4841 **Mobile:** 07866 222 656 alastairmc Alpine@btinternet.com