

# Spurtle



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**BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free**

## TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING

Edinburgh's Licensing Board – traditionally less transparent than stout – issued a clearly revised Statement of Policy in late November 2018 [bit.ly/2AGdUzV]. Section 8 and Appendix 2 may particularly interest locals.

Based on advice from Edinburgh Alcohol and Drugs Partnership, Police Scotland, NHS Lothian, and others, the Board considered areas with above-average levels of alcohol-related harms and crimes.

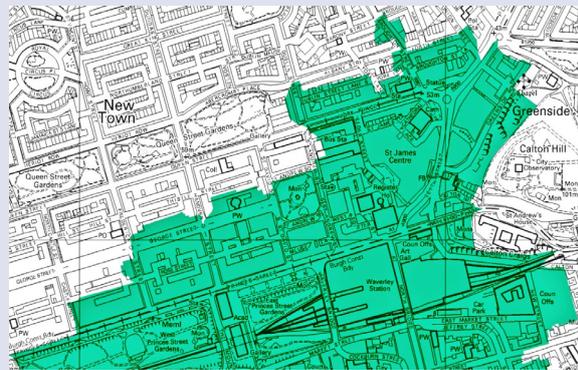
Princes and Leith Street 'intermediate data zones' emerged as problematic, and will now be deemed areas of overprovision. These geo-statistical IDZ blocks extend north to George Street, Greenside, and parts of Dublin, Broughton, Forth, and Union Streets.

Revised Board policy now creates a 'rebuttable presumption against the grant of new premises licences, provisional premises licences and major variations to increase capacity of premises in these localities'.

Significantly, the IDZs include the emerging Edinburgh St James. That still-to-be-filled quarter already faces a high-street retail blight in the UK caused partly by online shopping and partly by Brexit-related anxiety. Limiting alternative booze-inclusive Hospitality options will not be welcomed by TH Real Estate, which is developing the area and also owns the Omni Centre (see Briefly, p. 2).

Elsewhere in the Statement, the Board also expressed concern about noise and disturbance from establishments catering for 200+ patrons. And it reaffirmed that, where new applications for licences indicate music will be played, a condition for approval will be: no audible nuisance in neighbouring residential premises.

*Spurtle* last considered trickle-down benefits of reduced alcohol consumption in Issue 278, p.2 [bit.ly/2BCS7e2].



## CROSS LOCALS FORCE MAST U-TURN



Redbraes residents reacted angrily in late 2018 to siting of a towering new telecoms tower on Broughton Road, within inches of the Gretna Memorial in Rosebank Cemetery. They regard it as distracting and disrespectful [bit.ly/2Rlypsu]. A wide range of local elected representatives were enlisted to oppose the intrusion, and in January Deirdre Brock, MP heard back from BT that they recognise the problem and will reposition the mast further away [bit.ly/2SS5UU]. Good work all round.

## RISING UNEASE AROUND PARK EVENTS

During December's meeting, the Transport & Environment Cmte considered a Review of Major Events in Parks (2017–18) based on consultation over the autumn. Here, we consider comments on parks in Greater Spurtleshire.

Dusherra and Beltane events on Calton Hill met with a good level of satisfaction, although crowd control prior to the latter drew some criticism.

Local residents complained about noise during the Foodies Festival in Inverleith Park. The operator has agreed to reduce music in 2019.

Concerns were raised about use of W. Princes St Gardens in general, and Oktoberfest in particular (2017). Obstructed views, congestion, and an alcohol-centric event were criticised.

In E. Princes St Gardens, overuse, crowd control, restriction of public access, and damage to tree roots surrounded the Summer Festival Wheel. The Summer Sessions (Issue 280) were panned for being ticketed events in public space, restricting access, offering poor ground protection, negatively impacting existing concessions, litter, noise, and obstruction of views. Edinburgh's Christmas drew the most negative comments. Objections included: commercialisation, damage to park fabric, length of repairs, overcrowding, noise, poor quality of stalls, level of alcohol sales, poor visual appeal.

The Report concludes: 'The general theme of the consultation is a perceived over-commercialisation of public parks with Princes St Gardens being the main concern. Questions about the restriction of public access to the park and the suitability of some types of events appear to be increasing.' Findings will be shared with CEC's Events Planning and Operations Group.



## BROUGHTON ST MARY'S REACHES OUT



Writing in last month's *Broughton Beacon*, Broughton St Mary's minister Peter Macdonald has outlined a 10-year strategy for mission and outreach.

The first phase, 2019–24, will involve deepening links with community organisations such as the Foodbank, Waverley Care, Annandale Street Mosque, The Yard, Canonmills Baptist Church, Bellevue Chapel, LGBTIQ groups, and local businesses.

In the second phase, 2025–30, he plans to build upon the new activities and partnerships. 'None of us know the destination, but we will journey in faith and hope,' he says.

# Briefly



Over recent months, we've reported problems at the north-west corner of **Gayfield Sq**, where motorists have repeatedly adjusted **rubber barriers** to create a convenient shortcut. Brightly coloured **bollards** now block their way, but let bicycles pass. Cyclists have thanked local councillors and **CEC Roads** officers for the change. *Spurgle* particularly likes the adjacent pareidolic mastodon (see image above).

Residents across Broughton have been reporting problems with the new **smaller waste-recycling bins**. Whilst more convenient to access, they are filled more quickly, leading to excess rubbish being left beside them. For reasons which are unclear, lids appear to become detached easily and are not replace timeously. The result is **more litter** blowing around local streets than before. Councillors and officials have been contacted.

As we went to press, the **Development Management Subcmt** was preparing to consider Drum's application to demolish and redevelop **106-62 Leith Walk**. Officials recommended approval. Some 1,831 people objected to the proposal; 2,051 supported it, many of them, apparently, students.

By 11 Dec, 22 prospective bidders had expressed an interest in buying the Royal Bank of Scotland site between **Dundas St and King George V Park**. RBS agents have now whittled them down to a shortlist. A decision on the successful developer is expected in late spring.

The next meeting of the Broughton History Society will be on 4 Feb at 7pm in **Drummond CHS**. John Martin will talk on 'Capital Brewing'.

A developer plans to convert the former **public lavatory at Canonmills** from pissoir to craft pizzeria. A **zinc-clad second storey** is proposed, with large windows overlooking the **Water of Leith**.

Hungary opened a new consulate at **25 Union St** in Dec, to provide services for the estimated **10k Hungarians** living in Scotland. It joins 4 other Hungarian consulates in the UK, at: Belfast, Cardiff, Liverpool, and – inexplicably – Torquay. For previous coverage of **Hungary-Scotland** connections, see [bit.ly/2VRuDKk].

By the closing date for comments on 4 Jan, 60 people across the city had objected to **THRE's** proposal to extend the Greenside **Omni Centre** southwards and create a large single-storey bar where currently there are trees, benches, and a view of Calton Hill [bit.ly/2RjC5Ps].

## 25 and still stirring

Break open the bubbly! *Spurgle* is 25 years old this month. The first paper issue of Broughton's free, independent stirrer appeared in February 1994. Under founding editor John Dickie, it was put together by a small group of locals inspired by the success of the anti-poll tax campaign, the unsuccessful struggle to save London Street Primary School, and the achievements over previous months of local residents' associations.

It aimed to: provide a contact point for people wanting to change things; help local action groups publicise their work; make connections between 'the news' and life in Broughton; and 'generally stir things up a bit'.

Some 280 monthly issues later, that's pretty much where we remain, although our coverage has expanded westwards across half the New Town and occasionally south to Princes Street Gardens. In addition, the creation of a complementary website in 2009 and a social-media presence have given us space to say considerably more about more, more often. We're still independent, still not-for-profit, and still funded solely by adverts and subscriptions. No one gets paid for *Spurting* except to cover expenses.

Our core team now numbers around 17, although 27 locals contributed content of some sort to the last issue of 2018. We're always open to new faces and fresh ideas, so if you fancy getting involved, please do get in touch (see page 1).



**BROUGHTON'S O.K.**  
That's the verdict of 50 local residents interviewed in January 2018. Asked if they liked living here, 44 gave a 'strongly yes', 4 more a 'moderate yes', and 2 a 'moderate no'. The city on your doorstep? And just it is a wonderful place, with great gardens, the Water of Leith nearby, paths to walk or cycle on, 'plenty of greenery'. They said this could be even better, with more trees and flowers planted, and any spare spaces grassed over or paved with green areas.



**Action on local traffic**  
The above are different opinions about how to improve the area. One local resident said he would like to see more trees and flowers planted, and any spare spaces grassed over or paved with green areas. Another local resident said he would like to see more trees and flowers planted, and any spare spaces grassed over or paved with green areas. Another local resident said he would like to see more trees and flowers planted, and any spare spaces grassed over or paved with green areas.

## Drummond's future looks secure

In an Improvement Plan and Growth Strategy for Gaelic Medium Education, approved by the Education, Children & Families Cmte in October, members agreed to work towards opening a new dedicated GME secondary school in Aug 2025 [bit.ly/2G8cgwy].

Site options are Castlebrae, Granton Waterfront, and two as yet unnamed campuses to be shared with a non-GME school.

*Spurgle* has since received unofficial confirmation that neither of these shared options is Drummond CHS [bit.ly/2KUw9G8], if only because it could not be expanded for such use within the specified timeframe. A decision is expected by Feb 2020, to be finalised after statutory consultation by Nov 2020.



## Where wayfinding meets wonder and mystery

*Spurgle* has mixed feelings about the newly arrived Bellevue Crescent monolith. Most of them negative.

We think the design is wrong for the New Town. We wonder who exactly is welcoming whom, and what is the point. We asked the Council for answers, and were told the object had been installed by the Locality Parks Department under its ongoing improvement of parks as part of parks-quality assessments.

'In order to meet minimum quality scores, work is carried out to improve signage and identification of parks where possible (i.e. installing notice boards or signs such as these). Our South-East Locality seems to be the only one installing this particular kind of sign, each of which costs c.£500. There's another on Calton Terrace. The manufacturer CED Ltd has a website where it explains, 'When it comes to bringing power and presence to your outdoor space, our range of boulders, standing stones and palisades will draw the eye and turn stone's innate beauty into a key feature. Even the most simplest of garden designs can be transformed into a dramatic outdoor scheme with a strategically placed standing stone, group of boulders, or palisade arrangement.'

'We've carefully selected a variety of unusual and durable feature stones that will inspire a sense of wonder and mystery based on their interesting shapes, textures and colour variations.' *Spurgle* is certainly mystified but unpersuaded. Local dogs seem more enthusiastic.



## Selfish drivers irk patient parkers

A reader reports problems at Bellevue Medical Centre's car park in Huntingdon Place. She says vehicles from Enterprise Rent-a-Car in Annandale Street are routinely left there, taking spaces meant for patients, and a disabled bay was once used by company staff to change a tyre. (Car parkers from a nearby mosque are no angels, either.) Polite complaints have not solved the problem.

A spokesperson for the company told us, 'Enterprise strives to be a good neighbour and has excellent relationships with businesses in the local area. We have looked into this matter and are confident that this will not be an issue moving forward.' Excellent use of the handbrake.

Meanwhile, our reader also feels disappointed by the number of disabled spaces in recent draft plans for a redesigned George St, and claims such arrangements are poor across Edinburgh in general, particularly compared to Stirling's active promotion of accessibility for all. If other readers have views on this, we'd like to hear them.

## Edinburgh on high: Stupendous statuary

In St Michael's Churchyard, Inveresk, lie the remains of Alexander Handyside Ritchie (1804–70), creator of around 32 statuary works, principally in Edinburgh, whose adornments of major buildings may be glimpsed in passing but whose creator remains as obscure now as his final resting-place.

Ritchie was a Musselburgh man who, from humble beginnings and initial studies at the Edinburgh School of Arts, trained in Rome with the celebrated Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen, under the sponsorship of the 5th Duke of Buccleuch. From his first studio at 92 Princes Street, and later on the Mound and Coates Place, he designed an immense variety of commissioned works.



For his works nearest to Broughton, go to the former Bank of Scotland at 38–9 St Andrew Square and look up. On the parapet stand six stupendous sculptures in neo-classical style, representing Navigation, Commerce, Manufacture, Science, Art, and Agriculture.

Other notable works are his figures of Hippocrates, Aesculapius, and Hygeia on the façade of the Royal College of Physicians, Queen Street; and his touching group of Caledonia and her Children above Edinburgh Central Library, George IV Bridge. A detailed biography remains to be written, but it seems Ritchie was wedded to his Art, not Mammon. He lived modestly, despite his fame. In later life cared for by his sister Euphemia in Musselburgh, he died unmarried, leaving £6 10s 6d in his will. —JRM

## Dr Charles Mercer (1929–2018)

It was with sadness that we learned recently of the death in October of Dr Charles Mercer, for many years a greatly respected and much-loved GP, practising at 27 Bellevue Place.

Charles was born in Edinburgh, the only son of William and Elizabeth Mercer. Educated at Daniel Stewart's, he went on to study Medicine at Edinburgh University, graduating at the age of 21.

While training to become a GP, he met Netta, then a theatre sister. They were married within a year, were happily together for more than 61 years, and had two children: Lesley (now a retired journalist) and Gavin (a consultant psychiatrist).

After retiring in the late 1980s, Charles travelled to Romania with volunteer nurses to offer help after the 1989 revolution. On his return, he founded Scotland Romania Medicaid, a charity bringing Romanian doctors to Scotland to update their professional expertise. A talented speaker, Charles travelled all over the country to raise funds, and a total of 50 doctors eventually received training here as a result. Affectionately known as 'el Presidente', he was recognised with an honorary professorship by the University of Cluj.

As well as gardening, music was a large part of Charles' life, and he was an extremely talented pianist. In the early 1990s, he enjoyed presenting 'An Evening with Charles Mercer', a classical music programme on Radio Forth.

At a private funeral, his daughter Lesley described him as 'a caring doctor who helped many people, a loyal friend, a loving father, and a very devoted husband'.

## Local man was first and last Scot

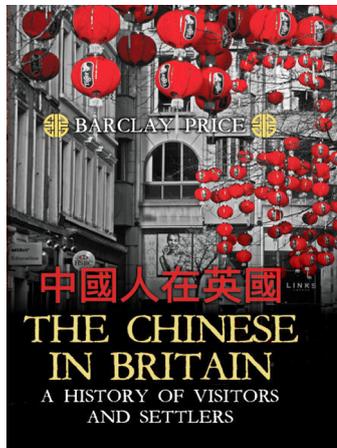
Barclay Price, who took up historical research on his retirement and began by tracing all the past householders of Albany Street, where he lives [bit.ly/2BCJnnY], has a new work published this month by Amberley Books.

*The Chinese in Britain* began with Price's discovery that the first Chinese person to settle in Britain lived in Edinburgh from 1780. William Macao resided at various addresses here, including Dundas Street and Henderson Row, and worked for the Board of Excise in Dundas House on St Andrew Square for 40 years.

The book contains a chapter on Macao's remarkable and previously unrecorded life, including the extraordinary fact that he's the only individual since the Act of Union in 1707 to have been legally designated a Scot.

The book's scope encompasses all the Chinese people who travelled to Britain, from the first in 1687. It includes seamen, students, restaurant staff, brides, diplomats, government officials, entertainers, and many others.

Through the lens of these lives, Price explores subjects as varied as: Britain's Chinatowns, Chinese people's portrayal on stage and screen, Britain's love affair with Chinese food, and shifting diplomatic relations between the two countries. For details, visit [bit.ly/2KEeO4r].



## Briefly



It may not be obvious to the naked eye, but work on the new **Picardy Place** road layout (approved last spring) is progressing on schedule and is due to be finished by the end of Sept. **Further consultations** about public realm on the promontory (including where to site works by **Laing and Paolozzi**) will be held shortly.

The owner of **Lifestyle Express** has appealed to the Scottish Government against Edinburgh Council's refusal of planning permission for an ATM at **20 Broughton St.** See [bit.ly/2LLJSjb]; [bit.ly/2yvCAut].

On 12 Dec, Planning Cmte members voted to approve the **Powderhall place brief** (Issue 279) as non-statutory guidance. An amendment by **Cllrs Booth and Staniforth (Grn)**, that would have ensured no net loss of open space, was defeated.

A 2nd edition of the bicentenary history of St Mary's RC Cathedral by **Darren Tierney** has been published with a new index. Copies (£12) can be reserved at [bit.ly/2CjNBA8].



Work has begun in earnest at **93 McDonald Rd.** Internal and external reconfiguration will provide a modern fire station, regional HQ, support-staff facilities, and a new **Museum of Fire.** More at: [bit.ly/2sH9yVA].

In late 2018, police charged a **29-year-old man** in connection with resetting goods stolen from the Santosa Yoga Centre on **Albert St.** Around £8k worth of goods was returned to the owner. Items worth a **5-figure sum** remain missing. If found guilty, the accused may face a long stretch.

The latest **LeithChooses** participatory-budget decision-making event will take place at Leith Community Education Centre in the **Kirkgate** on 23 Feb. Projects tackling inequality in Leith (broadly defined to include **Canonmills, Hillside and Broughton north of Bellevue Cres**), specifically around food and supporting vulnerable people, will face a **public vote** for a share of £44k allocated by City of Edinburgh Council.

## Moreover ...

Felling of 52 trees in **E Princes St Gdns** (Issue 280) spurred local resident and forester **Andrew Heald** and Edinburgh-born environmental campaigner **Eleanor Harris** to set up **Trees of Edinburgh** in Dec. 'Our aim is to share our knowledge and networks to build a society which **knows more** about its trees, their **management**, and the **benefits** they deliver. Our hope is that this will result in a city which **cares better** for its existing trees, and plants more.' See: [bit.ly/2E9u5cW].

**Friends of Pilrig Park** are spearheading a campaign against siting **Lady Boys of Bangkok** and **La Cirque Cabaret** there this summer. They cite parking, access and transport issues, loss of community greenspace, scale, noise and disruption, excessive length of the events, and numerous contraventions of principles in the **Edinburgh Parks Manifesto**. They deplore the fact that Leith Central Community Council was not included in consultations over the holiday period.

A man was charged in late 2018 with the theft of **62 pedal bicycles** from across the city, worth over £32k in total. Half have been recovered by police and returned to their owners. Anyone buying a second-hand bike online should **check the seller** has proof of ownership.

@**KirstinRalph** recently spotted unauthorised alterations to the billboard on **Broughton Rd**. A huge advertisement image there of some come-hithering beauty unsuitably dressed for the **Scottish winter** had been subjected to a reality-check in the form of **pasted labels**: 'Extensive auditions', 'Hair Team', 'Photoshopped', 'Stylist', '1000s of photos taken - 1 chosen'. Summing up the viewer's perspective: 'TEASED, TAUNTED AND DISTRACTED BY UNACHIEVABLE PERFECTION'.

Planning consent has been given for a revised proposal to build 11 flats at **5 Warriston Rd** (Ref. 18/02451/FUL) beside the Water of Leith. Changes recommended by the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency have been made: flood-resistant design and materials; safe flood-free access and egress; finished floor levels to be above crest levels of the adjacent flood wall plus 0.6m freeboard to adjust for climate change. However, **SEPA is now concerned** that this climate change allowance may not be sufficient, and therefore continues to object to the principle of housing development on the site.

To celebrate the Broughton *Spurtle's* **25th anniversary**, we've tracked down the last few missing issues and are uploading them to our **online archive**. Relive your youth at: [bit.ly/2SS5UuI].

**Spurtle 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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## LEITH CENTRAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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Next meeting: 7pm, 18 February  
Nelson Hall, McDonald Rd Library

[leithcentralcc.co.uk/meeting-dates](http://leithcentralcc.co.uk/meeting-dates)



Leith Central Community Council

**Deidre Brock MP**  
Edinburgh North and Leith



Regular Surgeries

**Leith: 1st Friday of the month**  
1-2pm, 166 Great Junction Street  
**Leith Walk: 2nd Friday of the month**  
3.30-4.30pm, McDonald Rd Library  
**Stockbridge: 3rd Friday of the month**  
1-2pm Stockbridge Library  
**Royston/Wardieburn Community Centre: Last Friday, 4-5pm**  
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## Ben Macpherson MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament  
for Edinburgh Northern  
and Leith Constituency



## Constituency Surgeries

(no appointment necessary)

**Every Monday:**  
5-6pm at  
Leith Library  
28-30 Ferry Road  
Edinburgh  
EH6 4AE

**Every Friday:**  
4-5pm at  
Royston/Wardieburn Community Centre  
Pilton Drive North  
Edinburgh  
EH5 1NF

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