

Spurtle



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Tel: 556 4848

spurtle@hotmail.co.uk

BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

SCHOOL PROBLEMS LOOM DUE TO BROUGHTON BABY BOOM

Parents at Broughton Primary School (BPS) are mobilising against Council plans to accommodate rising pupil numbers.

BPS's theoretical capacity is 326 pupils (13 classes), but the 2012/13 roll was 346 and increased intake in August may require team teaching in P1 and 14 classes across the school as a whole. Already there is no room for library, breakout or dedicated drama and music spaces. (The authority requires 4 such spaces for a roll this size.) But beware: figures in this debate vary according to different sides' interpretations.

A cross-party Forum on Children & Families Estate Evaluation was set up last autumn and is now considering: reconfiguring part (not all) of the gym/nursery building; day-time access to after-school club premises; 4 new modular classrooms in the playground costing £1m; a rejigged catchment area; and moving special language classes to Leith Walk PS. (The latter two would require statutory consultation under the Schools [Consultation] [Scotland] Act 2010.)

Officers met the PTA and school management on 23 May, and reported in June. A Children & Families Committee decision is expected in August.

The Council is *not* considering re-use of the empty former Broughton Higher Grade School (aka the annexe) whose 3,555m² floorspace stands adjacent and connected at 154 McDonald Rd. Missives have already been concluded for its sale to Kingsford Estates, subject to planning permission as 74 studio flats.

Selling off such purpose-built estate next door is controversial in its own right. But parents are also disturbed at unvetted strangers setting up home within the school's intimate environment.

Parents met on 12 June and – having rejected other strategies – resolved to challenge the annexe's change of use and its potential impact on children. In the longer term, they hope to stop the sale or renegotiate its terms. For further details, see *Breaking news* (24.6.13).

FUNDS SOUGHT FOR LEITH WALK REDESIGN

City of Edinburgh Council unveiled a long-awaited 'enhanced design' for the whole of Leith Walk on 6 June. It offers the prospect of radical improvements for pedestrians, cyclists and businesses.

Welcome features include:

- greater pedestrian priority and safer crossings
- simpler junctions
- a largely segregated cycle route from Pilrig Street uphill to Picardy Place

- two-way segregated cycle lane from Annandale Street to the Omni Centre

- new London Road signalled junction to replace the dangerous roundabout (pictured)

- 1.75m-wide cycle lane between Foot of the Walk and Dalmeny Street (into town) Pilrig Street (out of town)

- narrower road with more zebras, encouraging slower vehicle speeds
- a simpler streetscape favouring community activity, trading and business

- better connectivity for sustainable forms of travel between the Waterfront and city centre.

The Council and sustainable-travel charity Sustrans Scotland have collaborated on the plan, which will require just over £3m in additional funding from Transport Scotland and passing a Traffic Regulation Order. TS approval – if forthcoming – could take months and a TRO could take over a year. Even so, the Council hopes to start work early in 2014.



What's what from Stott



Photo courtesy of Speak Out!

Grant Stott – DJ, TV presenter, panto villain and former Gayfield Square police constable – was guest speaker at Drummond CHS's Celebration of Achievement last month. Refreshingly candid about the setbacks and haphazard choices behind his own careers, he advised today's school leavers to 'keep learning, keep taking chances, seize every opportunity'.

EYRE PLACE HOTEL TOO TALL

Royal Bank of Scotland has revealed new preapplication plans for land at Eyre Place/Terrace (*Breaking news*, 12.1.12; Issue 202). Mixed uses could include 'residential, retail, food and drink, office, care home and hotel uses, open space and ancillary works'.

Some locals dislike a new 4–5-storey hotel component which would be higher than the adjacent tenement and overshadow King George V Park. Others fear architects have underestimated poor ground conditions here where sewage smells have been reported lately. Will building disturb or flood foundations?

New Town & Broughton Community Council laments the loss of a neglected (but nevertheless green) space with no obvious compensating addition to local amenity.

The proposals exceed most locals' expectations, for which City Transport Convener Lesley Hinds, the Leith Programme team and Sustrans may take credit. Credit also goes to Greener Leith – which did much to articulate and organise the public's response during the consultation period, and Leith Central Community Council which maintained a sceptical pressure afterwards (Issues 213, 218).

The devil will now be in the detail, and – before that – in the extent to which the Scottish Government can be parted from its money. Unhelpful outlines can be seen at [<http://goo.gl/10C9p>]. Plans and explanations will be available at a drop-in session in McDonald Rd Library from 2–8pm on 23 July.

Briefly



A cross-party team of Edinburgh councillors took part in last month's Moonwalk to raise money for breast cancer research and support. Spurtleshire was well represented by **Deidre Brock (Ward 12)**, **Lesley Hinds (5)** and **Joanne Mowat (11)**, who strode with colleagues Maureen Child, Norma Austin Hart, and Vicki Redpath. Together 'Team Strident' had raised **£1,465** as we went to press, but their **sponsorship webpage** will stay active until 29 Oct at: [http://goo.gl/QYZTI].

Foremost Properties (Scotland) LLP's proposals for 67 Colony-style and flatted dwellings at land 35m southwest of **132 McDonald Road** have been granted planning consent (Ref. 12/03518/FUL; *Breaking news*, 11.6.13).

Gardeners and home owners in nearby New Town locations are alarmed at the arrival of **Japanese Knotweed** (*Fallopia japonica*). Other names in English for this stifling thug include: American/ Japanese/ Mexican bamboo, Chinese grope, donkey rhubarb, elephant ears, fleece flower, Hancock's curse, Himalayan fleece vine, monkey fungus/weed, pea shooter and Sally rhubarb. To report its presence on Council-owned land, call **Invasive Weed Control** (Tel. 657 4815); on private land, call Environmental Health (Tel. 529 3030).

Water of Leith Conservation Trust will guide a walk from Dean Bridge–Canonmills along the route of **Edinburgh's Great Lade** (see p.3), uncovering social and natural history on Sun. 28 July, 2pm. £4 (£2 members). **Booking essential:** [admin@waterofleith.org.uk] or Tel. 455 7637.

'**Pickles of Broughton Street**' will open this month in **basement premises** below L'Escargot Bleu. An independent set-up, it will run as a licensed café plus deli specialising in **pickles and preserves**. Long may it last.

Parker is a Northumberland St Siamese cat whose unexpected disappearance last month was widely advertised across the **New Town**. He eventually returned safe and sound. *Spurtle* enquired about **where he had gone**. 'We're not entirely sure,' his owner told us, 'except that he spent 3 nights in Fingers Piano Bar. He is now grounded.'

Broughton Road – braking news

Readers may recall the protracted fight to make the developer (Barratt) of North Pilrig Heights fulfil its planning consent condition by installing a puffin crossing on Broughton Road opposite Redbraes (Issue 198).

The crossing finally opened in October 2012, but already the anti-skid surface laid by Barratt has deteriorated badly. 'I would say it's also verging on unsafe, especially for cyclists,' says our correspondent Tim Smith. 'The surface is lumpy and the loose material could even cause the skidding it's supposed to prevent.'

Smith tried reporting the problem to Clarence in January this year, but made little progress. A Council source elsewhere has since informed him that Barratt denies any responsibility for the problem and refuses to fix it. Barratt even suggests the underlying road surface may have been somehow defective. ('It clearly isn't, as anyone can see,' says Smith.)

Spurtle understands the dispute is now being passed up the line in East Market Street for further consideration. In the meantime, the new crossing—intended to improve pedestrian safety, particularly for children en route to and from school—may inadvertently have made the area more dangerous.

Smith has raised the matter with local councillors and awaits developments. We'll tell you what happens.



Good times just around the corner

In Issue 219 we noted major refurbishment under way at the Stag's Head on Broughton Rd. *Spurtle* now hears that the man behind the new venture is Michael O'Sullivan, current licensee at the Doric Bar and Restaurant on Market Street.



Meanwhile, across the road at McLachlan's on Canonmills, further substantial works are in progress. These we understand are for the Shilling Group, which currently runs six real-ale houses across the capital including The Fountain, Golden Rule, Carriers Quarters and Thomson's Bar.

A bridge too slow



Colonies residents are fed up with the long and inconvenient wait for their new Bell's Bridge. (Lagan told them earlier in the year that it would open in Mar/Apr.)

On 1 June, local desperadoes briefly occupied the crossing; but 5 days later, the barriers were back in place. Similar impatience and instances of unauthorised access attend the new, attractive and apparently complete raised walkway along Warriston Rd.

A Council spokesperson attributes delays to snags: 'The quality of work is important and we won't take over the bridge, or let it reopen, until we're satisfied that the project has been completed to the right standard.' No likely date is available.

Elm Row unstuck

Some 65 pupils from St Mary's and Pilrig Park Schools tackled eyesore vandalism and graffiti on Leith Walk and Elm Row last month. They joined Council specialists, community, church and individual volunteers plus PC Andy Higgins as part of Police Scotland's 3-day Ship Shape campaign. This aims to show kids and young adults how much effort is involved in tidying up, and to restore all ages' personal pride in the community. As part of the scheme, special kits can now be borrowed by the public from local businesses for removing graffiti, stickers and other unwanted items: see *Extras* (21.6.13).



Photo: © Andy Higgins

That's another fine mess ...

Unwelcome pongs around Eyre Terrace are nothing new (p.1).

In September 1842, for Queen Victoria's first visit to the capital, patriotic citizens erected a grandstand in a grazing field at the corner of Pitt and Brandon Streets (where Apple Pharmacy stands now).

A witness later recalled 'having seen through the space between the floor boards, the filthy sewage-laden mill stream taken from the Water of Leith, and carried along the back of Moray Place on to Canonmills, after serving the mills of Stockbridge'.

Above this foul brew sat a crowd 'for several weary hours', until told Victoria would not come until next day. No-one informed the Lord Provost and Council that the royal party would arrive at breakfast time and so, in the morning, met only by the reassembled throng, the Queen and Prince Consort swept past under cavalry escort in under 20 seconds. 'All in the grand-stand were struck dumb with disappointment, and once more returned home aggrieved ... I learned thus early in my life how the joyful and the distressful go together.'

Meanwhile, the Company of Archers had joined the Queen in Granton and attempted to keep pace at the trot. 'Many [being] no longer in the vigour of youth, and ... of rotund form, dropped out ... staggering to the railings in Inverleith Row, and panting for breath.' Two survived until the hill up to Princes Street, then 'dropped out lest they should drop down'. The whole fiasco – for which the Lord Provost and Council were unjustly blamed – appeared in this contemporary cartoon. [Source: Sir J.H.A. Macdonald, *Life Jottings of an Old Edinburgh Citizen*, 1915.] AM



Young people to dig football

Archaeology Scotland – the national heritage education charity – is planning a geophysical survey, excavation, site interpretation, and on-site recording at the former St Bernard's Football Club ground in and adjacent to King George V Park.

Two trenches will be dug close to the path leading down from Royal Crescent. The programme aims to develop team working, language and maths skills, technology management, independent thinking and time keeping among a group of disadvantaged young people. For St Bernard's background, see Issue 178 and *Breaking news* (1.1.10).



Bartholomew Survey Atlas of Scotland (1912)

Political jigs, clandestine capers

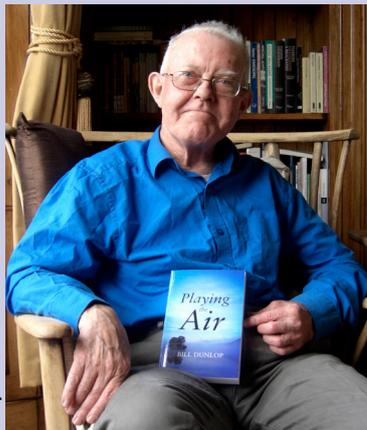
Imagine a Scotland where loosely structured, secret, ideological movements play games of deadly cat and mouse with the state. Imagine a shadowy world of plot, counter-plot and espionage, occasionally erupting into violent protest and emphatic repression. Science fiction? Fact!

Bill Dunlop's debut novel – *Playing the Air* – is a dark, comedic, political crime thriller which slips between the present day and Scotland in the 1790s. It's a comparatively obscure period he's long been interested in, relishing its radical outcasts under the 'Dundas Supremacy' and their fumbling progress via crypto-Free Masonry and the Enlightenment towards egalitarian politics and establishment of the Free Church.

Combine all this via fiddler-bard Niel Gow with the smoky, abundantly hydrated and occasionally law-bending underbelly of today's folk-music scene (one Dunlop loves and studies with the same fascination other people reserve for football) and you have the backdrop for intersecting intrigues across time and place.

Edinburgh-born Dunlop graduated here, worked for ages at the University Settlement, and has lived in Eyre Place for the last 10 years. He's no stranger to creative writing, having penned numerous plays including a 1993 Fringe First Award-winning adaptation in Scots of the *Oresteia*, or *History* (in which he has two degrees), but *Playing the Air* (published in June) is his first excursion into long-form fiction. The path to its completion has occasionally been uphill, but a sequel is already in progress.

Playing the Air appears under the Matador imprint (www.troubador.co.uk) as a paperback (£8.99) and eBook (£3.99), eISBN 9781780885797. AM



Briefly



Hart St's New Town Sauna closed after Police attention last month. Meanwhile, 10 police spent much of 12 June in the London St Sauna. Police Scotland told *Spurtle* the activity – carried out with other agencies – is about **keeping people safe**. Despite official assurances, uncertainty surrounds exactly what is now tolerated in **such Edinburgh establishments**. Two local businesses may lose licences.

Despite ample advanced notice, CEC officials have postponed interviews for the now vacant **head teacher** post at Broughton PS (Issue 219) from June to Christmas. *Spurtle* blames **too much flour and not enough water** in the Council's **bureaucratic paste**. Meanwhile, the impeccably organised Mrs Rushforth will continue as acting depute.

The **Scottish Chamber Orchestra Chorus** and chorusmaster Gregory Batsleer (familiar to many locals from regular rehearsals at Broughton St Mary's) will perform Duke Ellington's '**serious and swinging ... reverent and hip**' *Sacred Concert* at the doppelgänger Queen's Hall on 24 July as part of the **Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival**: [<http://goo.gl/SeyJS>].

16 June was **Father's Day**. St Mary's Market organisers emailed stallholders in advance with news that they would be 'encouraging more customers ... over that weekend with the lure of free seed packs'. **Write your own punchline**.

The **LGBT Centre for Health & Wellbeing** on Howe St has won the Mental Welfare Commission's **Principles into Practice Award** in the Respect for Diversity category. To find out more, visit: [<http://goo.gl/jyGBm>].

Meanwhile, staff at the Centre seek **LGBT community members aged 65+** to share experiences in a training/awareness-raising film on challenges they face using **mainstream health and social care** services. Contact Stef: Tel. 523 1102 or [stefan@lgbthealth.org.uk].

Warriston Rd's floodwork-related closure is due to end on 31 July. **Bellevue Cres** footway repairs are scheduled for completion on 23 Aug.

Free, friendly social-media training is available from 5.30–7.30pm on Mon. 8 July and Wed. 14 Aug. at **McDonald Rd Library**.

Moreover ...

Blue Moon – a gay Broughton beacon since April 1988 – has closed after 3 years spent seeking a buyer. The former owner is off ‘**somewhere sunnier**’, possibly Poland, taking the recipe for his fabled macaroni cheese with him. Pier Place-based Thai restaurant **Port of Siam** plans to open here in early July. For Blue Moon’s earliest days, see the Remember When website at: [<http://goo.gl/7fqSw>].

In Issue 219 we mentioned **bike racks on Broughton St**. A CEC Transport official shares our correspondent’s sense of lack, and promises to address it ‘later this year’. **Suggest locations** to: [cycling@edinburgh.gov.uk]. In the next few months, a total of 100 extra bike racks will appear at city-centre locations including: St Andrew Square, Rose St, George St and Raeburn Place.

The 2nd **Edinburgh International Fashion Festival** will open on 19 July at the Mansfield Traquair Centre. Celebrated design house Clements Ribeiro’s A/W **13 collection** will feature in a dramatic runway show, followed by an after-party ‘until late’. Expect a **punk trousseau pot pourri of mini-kilts and red winkle-pickers** from *Spurtle* correspondents.

Doubt surrounded the authenticity of the stag’s head photo on the **Stag’s Head on Broughton Rd** last month (*Breaking news*, 14.6.13). Was it a roe, red or fake? Douglas Richardson, **Head of Living Collections** for Highland Wildlife Park, finally confirmed: ‘It is definitely one of the North American deer of the genus *Odocoileus*, probably the eastern species, the **white-tailed deer** *Odocoileus virginianus*.’

The inaugural **Yummy Mummy Market** in Drummond CHS playground was due on Sat. 29 June. No mothers for sale on the day, instead: new and ‘pre-loved’ baby and children’s clothes, equipment, toys, books and maternity wear. Stalls cost £20, entry £1. **The next market will be in Aug.** Details: Tel. 07958 465162.

Mark, Pam and Paul Crolla have left their café at 43 Broughton St in search of less onerous challenges elsewhere. In their place has opened a new café, amusingly named **Firth of Froth**. So long as there are no winkles in the cappuccinos.

Some people photograph **garden gnomes** against scenic backdrops around the world. **Iain MacPhail** preferred to pose with a *Spurtle* on **tour** with local band **Whisky Kiss** in France last month. He suggests twinning Broughton with Angerville, if only because he could not find **Righteousindignationville** on the map.

Spurtle Team: J. Dickie, T. Griffen, M. Hart, F. Harvey, A. McIntosh, J. R. Maclean, T. Smith, 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

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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

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21-62 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.lazarowicz.mp@parliament.uk
www.marklazarowicz.org.uk

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