

Spurtle



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2015**

No 238

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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

LEITH PROGRAMME – BUSY GOING NOWHERE

Reinstatement of the southern end of Leith Walk's carriageways and footways – from Pilrig Street to Elm Row – will not start any time soon.

This gloomy prognosis follows a meeting of Leith Central Community Council on 16 February at which two CEC officers were grilled on the much delayed 'Leith Programme' and its apparent deceleration from slow progress to no progress at all.

Iain MacPhail, (City Centre Programme Manager) and Ian Buchanan (Central & Leith Neighbourhood Manager) faced sustained and detailed questioning from disgruntled locals.

MacPhail outlined the work of the Picardy Place working group which has been meeting since August to prepare CEC's public-realm responses to anything TIAA Henderson Real Estate may throw up as part of plans for the north-east side of the St James Quarter. He says it's important to ensure a 'smooth interface' between this area and the southern end of the Leith Programme at Elm Row.

Sceptics say this is code for trams, and that uncertainty about if, where and when they will come is 'voodoo-ing' reinstatement (originally scheduled for completion by summer 2012) almost indefinitely. Council funding of £400k to pay for a report on the business cases for various tram options won't appear until June. Work from Pilrig Street–McDonald Road is unlikely to start before January 2016.

In Issue 237 we reported LCCC calls to spend the CEC money exclusively assigned for reinstatement works immediately. But at February's meeting, neither MacPhail nor Buchanan felt able to green-light any such process without a renewed political mandate.

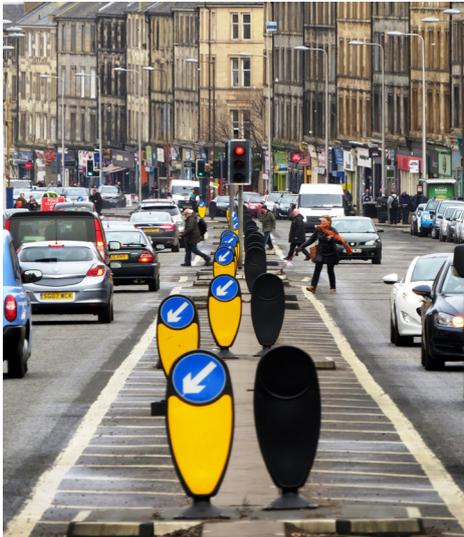
Some say the pressure is now on Transport Convener Leslie Hinds to resolve this gridlock in the run-up to her tilt at Edinburgh Northern & Leith in next year's Holyrood election.

SPURTLE TO HOST HUSTINGS

The UK General Election will be held on Thursday 7 May. *Spurtle* will run Edinburgh North & Leith constituency hustings at 7.30pm on Thursday 16 April in Broughton St Mary's Parish Church, Bellevue Crescent.

Hustings let locals see how candidates respond to the pressure of succinctly answering questions from potential voters (200 attended the last hustings). They don't know what the topics will be in advance, and questioners have the chance to respond afterwards.

Candidates already selected are: Mark Lazarowicz (Lab), who has served as MP here since 2001; Deirdre Brock (SNP), City councillor for the Leith Walk ward and Depute Lord Provost; Sarah Beattie-Smith (Green), who works on policy and research for a national charity and helps organise Common Weal Edinburgh North and Leith; Martin Veart (Lib Dem), a geophysical engineer with an interest in marine mammal observation; and Iain McGill (Con), director of an employment agency for social-sector staff, and Community Councillor for the New Town and Broughton Community Council.



OCTOBUS



For those people who can never remember which bus will get them from one end of the barony to the other and back again, this sinuously 8-shaped aide memoire is just the ticket. It is by Keith Thompson and is for sale in Curiouser and Curiouser on Broughton Street.

OLD ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL (AND A RARE OLD RAMMY)

Pre-application plans to develop the old Royal High School (RHS) on Regent Road as a luxury hotel and exhibition space went on show last month (see our website 5.2.15). They will be exhibited again in more detail from 5–6 March. At the time of writing, they have generated five main lines of controversy.

First, CEC's apparent prioritisation of economic 'best value over cultural worth' when establishing the original design competition in 2009/10 has alarmed all those who want to retain Edinburgh's UNESCO World Heritage Site status. This group also tends to distrust the opaque judging process by which a winner was selected and awarded the lease despite the misgivings of CEC's own Head of Planning (5.2.15).

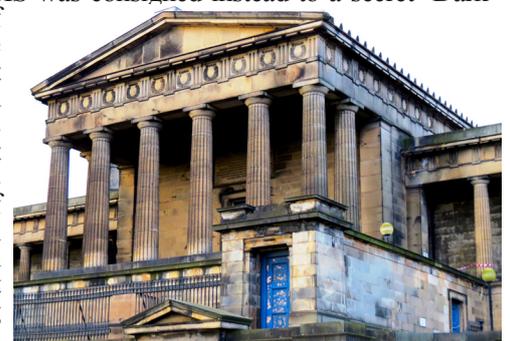
Second, there is determined and vociferous resistance from what may crudely be described as the 'architectural heritage lobby'. This opposes any major change to the structure or setting of this 'iconic' neo-classical building which is of international significance.

Third, the transfer by City of Edinburgh Council of such an important resource from public ownership to private commercial use on a long 125-year lease irks many (24.2.15).

Fourth, some critics say the developers' questionnaire, handed out at the first PAN exhibition, was flawed. They say it contained wrong information, and leading questions (2.3.15).

Fifth, *Spurtle's* surprising revelation (4/16.2.15) that the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland had agreed to CEC's request not to place the RHS on its publicly accessible Buildings at Risk Register has caused a major stink. RHS was consigned instead to a secret 'Dark' Register, out of sight,

where it couldn't excite awkward questions. This story later went national, and is the subject of further Freedom of Information enquiries by us at the time of going to press.



Briefly

CEC's assessment of **temporary and experimental George St changes** has exceeded everyone's expectations. The street may be a mess, but ways of assessing the mess look **remarkably robust, well intentioned and accountable**. However, so far, knock-on traffic effects in parallel New Town streets to the north have **not been properly measured**. CEC acknowledges the failure, and has now appointed private consultants. Well done, them.

Broughton History Society meets on 16 Mar at 7pm in Drummond Community High School. Barbara Harvey will talk on 'The Shale Oil Industry in West Lothian'.

The **mixed recycling trial** in Bellevue has had mixed success. Some locals love it. Others are maddened by their stupid neighbours' inability to put the **right rubbish in the right bins**. Environment Convener Leslie Hinds **rollocked Spurtle** for online repetition of 'myths and misconceptions' about recycling (27.2.15). Contributors promptly **rollocked** her in return. All part of the joyous and **discordant hurly-burly** of being a social species. If your bins overflow, Tel. 529 3030 and **politely request** more frequent collections.

Two disobliging villains marked the opening of a **new e-cigarette and computer-repair shop** at 134 Dundas St last month by burgling it after its first day. They got away with **£100 in cash**, but will have cause for a sharp intake of breath when they learn that their images are clearly visible on **local CCTV footage**. This end of Dundas St is a regular crime hotspot. A lot of inconvenience could be saved if: (a) **shopkeepers left no money** on their premises overnight; (b) **Police Scotland** positioned a bobby here in the small hours and waited for the **regular-as-clockwork crooks** to show up.



Dofos – the brightly coloured petshop with a distinctive smell – has gone walkies from **Blenheim Place** and won't be back. It has now relocated to **349 Leith Walk**, between Iona and Dalmeny Sts. In its place, another branch of **Pieute has popped up**, selling brightly coloured apparel with a distinctive alternative ethos.

Drummond Civic Association held its AGM and social event on 2 Feb in the **Polish Club** at 11 Drummond Place. There was an attendance of 32, who relished a **riveting** address by Sutherland Forsyth on the **recrudescence** of **Botanic Cottage**, now well underway in the RBGE garden.

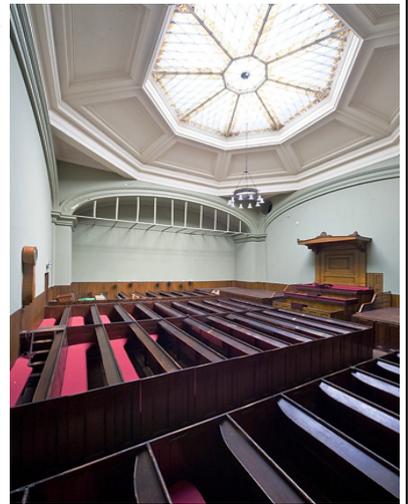
Bright idea to light up Glasite

The Scottish Historic Buildings Trust, new owner of the Glasite Meeting House on Barony Street, is to operate a community cinema in the meeting hall there between now and mid-April.

ILLUMINATION is an intelligent experiment in breathing life into the listed building, whose listed pews had until now struck many as more of an impediment than a useful feature.

Twenty-five evening screenings will take place in a programme of old and new releases, including children's films (*ET, Lego Movie*), animation (*Dumbo, Wall-E*), sci-fi (*Interstellar, 2001: A Space Odyssey*), fantasy (*Labyrinth, Spirited Away*), chocolate (*Chocolat, Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory*) and unsettling eye candy (*The Imitation Game, Under the Skin, Cloud Atlas*). A full week of science-themed films will run during the Science Festival (13–19 April). Tickets cost £5. For a full listing and to book online (fee), go here: <http://goo.gl/8bKJFa>. For information, Tel. 220 1232.

We think this is a brilliant innovation. Popcorn and hot chocolate will be available, but we recommend you take your own cushion.



Rosebank repairs on track

Moves are now afoot to fix or replace the plaque outside Rosebank Cemetery which erroneously dates the Gretna Rail Disaster at Quintinshill to 1916 not 1915 (Issue 237).

Following constructive nagging from local Tim Smith, Councillor Deidre Brock has learned that CEC's Services for Communities will take necessary steps after consulting the Royal Scots.

SfC will also undertake some repairs to gravestones, replace coping stones on the outer wall, and resurface the cemetery road in preparation for a centenary commemoration in May, one of 10 such war-related ceremonies taking place around the country in 2014/15 funded by the Scottish Government.

Some 210 Leith-based soldiers died in the smash on 22 May 1915, as well as 16 railwaymen and civilians.

Good read contains 'bad lot'

Darren Tierney's *St Mary's Metropolitan Cathedral 1814–2014: Most Beloved Gate of Heaven* recounts the first 200 years of the Broughton Street institution which, as St Mary's Chapel, first opened for business here in August 1814, writes *David Hill*.

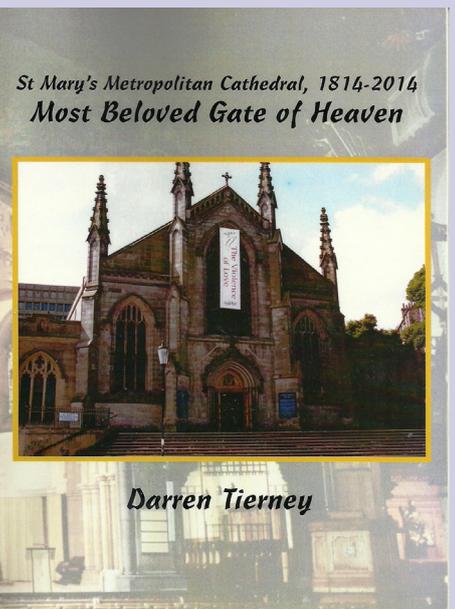
Published last month, the book is both a record of the building and its *dramatis personae*, and an attempt to situate them within a wider ecclesiastical and socio-political framework.

The author has fruitfully explored Church and other archives, and synthesises secondary literature to good effect.

Some items dug up from Church records make for interesting reading. For instance, we are introduced to the *status animarum* for 1949, a register of local parishioners. Herein, we discover, among other things, that the McB family was a 'bad lot'. One wonders whether or not a 45-year-old Mrs C would have been devastated to hear herself described as a 'bit queer'.

While not hagiography, Tierney's account is sympathetic to its subject matter, and mostly steers clear of controversy. This reviewer finds much of value and interest in the book, but does wonder if the sin of omission has been committed.

It will, however, be a useful resource for those interested in the building and institution, and, also, for those fascinated by local history. A longer version of this review appears on our website (7.3.15).



St Mary's Metropolitan Cathedral, 1814-2014
Most Beloved Gate of Heaven

Darren Tierney

From Glenorchy to Glasshouse

The seemingly anomalous façade of the Glasshouse Hotel adjoining the Playhouse in Greenside Place is the only remaining vestige of a once substantial 19th-century church which occupied this site.

This was Lady Glenorchy's Low Calton Church, built in 1846 to replace a much earlier chapel built in 1774. It also comprised a school and served as a beacon for evangelical Protestantism, of which Lady Glenorchy was an early advocate.

Willielma Campbell (1741–86) was married to the 3rd Earl of Breadalbane, one of Scotland's wealthiest landowners. After his death in 1771, she devoted her own wealth and zeal to establishing several chapels in England and Scotland.

Gifford et al. characterise the Greenside Church thus: 'Tudor collegiate front ... with a broad crenellated tower, and a canted bay rising from the shallow porch'. There were extensive basements beneath, making the sides 5 storeys in height.

A John Ruskin drawing, supposedly of the building, is in fact of somewhere else. More on this intriguing case of mistaken identity and wandering masonry in Issue 239. *JRM*



Briefly



Rodney Street's **Royal British Legion Club** is on a recruitment drive for new members. **Young and old veterans** are sought to enjoy convivial company at reasonable prices with **televised sport**. A dispute with RBL's Central Branch over finances nearly caused the Club to close back in 2010, but disaster was eventually averted. This is the **last Branch in Edinburgh**, the city where the whole organisation was started by Lord Haig in 1921.

New Town & Broughton Community Council (NTBCC) finds much to applaud in plans to redevelop **42 St Andrew Sq.**, but is concerned about **visual intrusion** from planned new building on the roof. **It will oppose** associated demolition of a period tenement on **W. Register St.** which period is moot. Some say 1850s, others late Georgian.

NTBCC has also been evaluating proposals for the **new St James Quarter**. It has doubts about: (a) management of **massive car park excavations and** associated traffic; (b) choice of materials (**limestone or sandstone or concrete, and where**); (c) massing of the development as seen from **Multrees Walk and Calton Hill**; (d) exclusive residential car access along **Little King St.**

The Central Edinburgh Book Group meets on 10 Mar at 6.30pm in McDonald Rd Library. They will discuss **Penelope Fitzgerald's Offshore**. All welcome. Bring your own lifejacket.

The latest application to convert a **so-called garage** into a so-called office on E. Scotland St Lane has failed (Ref. 15/000147/FUL). CEC **declined to consider it** as nothing much had changed since they last rejected the plan. At this rate, someone may eventually have to use the structure for **parking a car**.

A fundraising ceilidh for the **Stockbridge Pipe Band** will birl in the Teviot Debating Hall, Teviot House, Bristo Sq on Sat 21 Mar. Featuring the **Pentlands Ceilidh Band** with performances by Stockbridge Pipe Band. **Tickets: £8, £5 for under 16s, under 10s free**. E-mail stockbridgepipeband @hotmail.com to reserve for collection on the night. **Children very welcome**. Doors open 7pm, first dance 7:30pm. **Licensed bar**, last orders 12.45am. Last legs shortly afterwards.

Tame your technology

ACE IT is a George Street-based charity which trains older people (50+) on how to use computers.

Classes are small, friendly, fully accessible and taught on iPads. A 5-week introductory course costs £52. Twice weekly drop-in sessions offer one-to-one tuition on any digital device – laptops, tablets, iPads, Kindles, smart phones and cameras – and cost £8.50 for a one-hour session.

To find out more, contact: ACE IT, 2nd Floor, 115 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 4JN; email: jenny@aceit.org.uk; Tel: 477 3883.



L'amore nella Vecchia Puzzolente

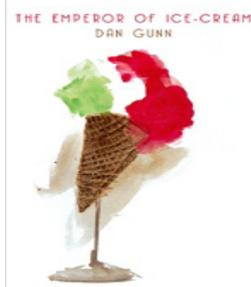
Edinburgh-raised author and academic Dan Gunn's *The Emperor of Ice Cream* is a new novel set in Edinburgh and Italy during the 1920s and '30s (Seagull Books, ISBN: 9780857422231).

It concerns the Broughton Street-based Pezzini family, whose younger members flirt with Fascism in Rome whilst establishing ice cream and fish-and-chip shops in the heart of Italian Auld Reekie: Annandale Street.

Violence, horror and death mingle with 'nationalism, love and gelato', writes local resident, novelist and critic Todd McEwen in last month's mostly favourable *Sunday Herald* review (<http://goo.gl/2EilJR>).

He particularly enjoyed Gunn's examination of flavours – bitter cherry, tart blood orange, cinnamon sorbet – and love, which he considers the real subject of the book.

'It's often said that there is a fundamental sadness to Italian life,' McEwen concludes. Apart from sweet teeth, perhaps this is 'another trait shared by the two countries of this story'.



Thrillingly – and trillingly – the notes of a mistle thrush, which is much less abundant than the song thrush, were identified in Drummond Place Garden last month. They consist of a harsh *charr* and a sharp *chick* – a short phrase constantly repeated. The 'mistle' derives from mistletoe, to whose berries this thrush is partial. The bird is also known as the 'storm cock', from the way it will perch on a tree and sing into the teeth of a gale. *JRM*



Image: Creative Commons – <http://goo.gl/p1zww>

Moreover ...



'Argent on a fess three cinquefoils in base a mullet sable,' as we often say, late on a Friday night/early Saturday morning, wondering why the mute postbox hasn't fallen for this or any of our previous **brilliantly original chat-up lines**. It is, of course, the technical armorial description of **George Heriot's coat of arms**, recently spotted through a lens on the former primary school currently occupied by flats and **The Bakehouse** at 32 Broughton St. The accompanying motto, '**I distribute cheerfully**', is pretty good for the neighbourhood, too, although local **bars, bistros and cafés** generally charge rather than dish out bursaries.

Spurtle's AGM will take place on 11 March in Broughton St Mary's Parish Church, starting at 7.15pm. **All welcome**. Judging by the last 20 years' experience, it is very, very unlikely indeed to descend into an evening of **riotous naked cavorting about an enormous bonfire**. Please come along anyway.

Looking towards the **2016 Scottish Parliament elections**, there will be a change in the **Edinburgh Northern and Leith Holyrood constituency** landscape. Labour MSP **Malcolm Chisholm** is retiring. CEC transport suprema **Lesley Hinds** will stand in his place.

Lothian cycle campaign group Spokes will hold a public meeting on '**The Bicycle in the City Centre**' on Thurs 26 Mar. at Augustine United Church, 41 George IV Bridge (6.45pm). Speakers will be **Prof Tom Rye** (Director, Napier Transport Institute), **Cllr Leslie Hinds** (CEC Transport Convener, yes, her, again), **Richard Darke**, Essential Edinburgh Projects Manager (yes, them again, bring your own mudguards). **Questions and debate afterwards**. Coffee, stall, exhibition, chat.

STOP PRESS: Latest Edinburgh North & Leith candidate to declare is Broughton resident and UKIP candidate **Alan Melville**, a retired Edinburgh Wolves linebacker (with background in Maths and Computing) currently working for Edinburgh life assurance company.

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1:30pm

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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
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New Town/Broughton Community Council

THE COMMUNITY COUNCIL
REPRESENTS THE VIEWS
OF LOCAL RESIDENTS TO
EDINBURGH CITY COUNCIL

Next Meeting:

9 March

at 7.30pm

Broughton St Mary's Parish
Church, Bellevue Crescent

www.ntbcc.org.uk/contact/

AM DECORATING

Your local painter & decorator **Alastair McAlpine**
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