

Spurtle



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November 2024

No 345

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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

NEW TOWN QUARTER – LATEST NEWS AND VIEWS



PBSA Block 01 looking from King George V Park

The first of 2 pre-application public consultations on revised plans for the New Town Qtr development between Dundas St and King George V Park (Issue 344) took place on 8 Oct.

A variety of facts, fears and assertions emerged at the event, including:

- Local concerns that the arrival of c.560 students in purpose-built student accommodation would distort the community. There is nothing in the modified City Plan 2030 to control student numbers. Confidence from developer Edison and PBSA managers Fusion that, even in a shrinking higher-education market, Edinburgh would never want for students. Edison says demand here already outstrips supply.

- Some neighbours worry that student accommodation could be filled, through commercial necessity or government decree, by refugees/migrants. They fear a subsequent crime wave.

- A few observers say developers' claim of low demand for office space in Edinburgh is 'contentious'.

- Poured-concrete construction would be harder to convert from PBSA to other uses than the more expensive steel-frame method originally proposed. The developers' cost-conscious 'value-engineering' approach is interpreted by some as a euphemism for poorer-quality building.

- Some locals view the park-facing elevation of the PBSA block (pictured) as featureless and poorly designed. Others consider the revised corner block at Fettes Row/Dundas St worse than the original.

- There is widespread approval for some leafy aspects of the proposal but also unease about potential displaced parking and overbearing domination of the park.

- There are doubts about 'bridge build-outs' narrowing the Fettes Row carriageway. Also concern here about possible raised height of c.305 new dwellings.

- Edison says the tendering process for construction will begin this month. Building of private homes will start in Q1 2025 followed by mid-market for-rent homes in Q2.

- Sceptics question whether their comments will make any difference to developers' plans.

The exhibition boards are available online at [bit.ly/ytmrstds]. The second and final PAN consultation will take place in Broughton St Mary's Parish Church from 2pm-7pm on 27 Nov. A planning application is not expected until mid-Dec at the earliest. It's at that stage that local opinion will be most effectively expressed. We'll suggest how then.

CAPITAL ATTRACTION

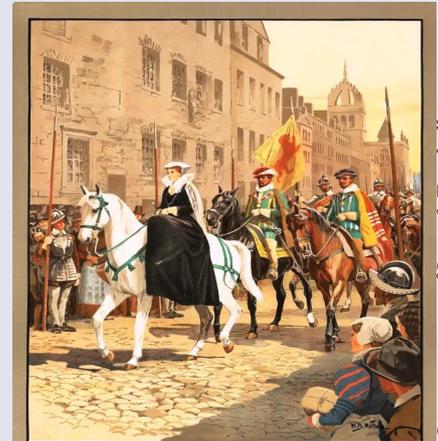


Image courtesy of Lyon & Turnbull.

EDINBURGH
THE ROYAL MILE
TRAVEL FROM KING'S CROSS, LONDON
LONDON AND NORTH EASTERN RAILWAY
OF ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND

Edinburgh's infatuation with tourism may have grown wings in recent years, but it is nothing new. This nostalgic image, dating from around 1930, is by the mostly military artist William Barnes Wollen (1857-1936) and was estimated to fetch up to £1,200 at Lyon & Turnbull's auction of Travel and Vintage Posters on 30 Oct. On the same day, the Cockburn Association staged a conference about 'Responsible Tourism: Solutions for Edinburgh's Future'. We'll report back on that soon.

PLEASE PUT A PENNY IN THE SPURTLE HAT

As Christmas approaches and thoughts turn to presents for family and loved ones, we suggest you ignore the ungrateful sods and spend the money on a *Spurtle* subscription instead.

Annual subscriptions cost £16 for a monthly hand-delivered copy (or whatever you can afford) and £25 for posted copies. This income supplements what we raise through advertising and ensures we have a stable float covering production costs when times are hard.

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WHO CONTROLS FIREWORK CONTROL ZONE?

A Firework Control Zone has been adopted for the first time on Calton Hill from 1-10 Nov (Issue 344).

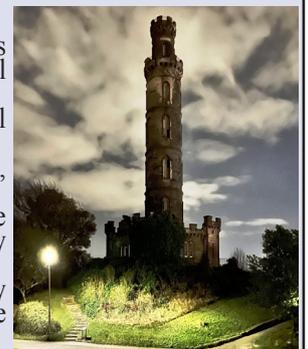
However, as we went to press, the extent to which the Council would publicise the arrangements and limit access to and supervise behaviour around the space remained unclear. Effective management will be important for all concerned, and few *Spurtle* has spoken to have confidence that officials will provide it.

Many locals support the FCZ here as long overdue. They cite safety, residential amenity, pollution, litter, animal welfare and general boorish yahooism as considerations.

But not everyone across Edinburgh shares these views, some accusing the Council of an over-proscriptive, priggish and kill-joy approach in an area which has been relatively trouble-free in the past.

Others (non-members) claim that the Calton Hill Preservation Trust, which pushed for the FCZ, has opaque decision-making processes; is unrepresentative of wider opinion about using the Hill; and has been disproportionately influential over the Council.

People on all sides of the argument agree that the ban does nothing to prevent the setting-off of fireworks at any point before or after the 1-10 Nov period, or 1 inch outside the FCZ during it. Ultimately, they say, firework use could only be controlled through much stricter national restrictions on their import, distribution and sale.



Briefly



The Dublin St Fox and adjacent Vixen event space have opened at **26B Dublin St** (the former serving breakfast, lunch, dinner, bar snacks and drinks) in premises previously occupied by the Little White Pig, the New Town Fox (a close relation), Spitfire and the New Town Bar.

Police seek information after a robbery at **Saxe Coburg St** on 11 Oct. Around 9.10pm, a man entered a property, threatened the 92-year-old occupant and stole cash before leaving. See [bit.ly/SxCbrb].

A glance at the **Sony CSL 15-minute City neighbourhood** map shows most people living in Broughton are under 10 minutes by bike or foot from outdoor activities, learning, supplies, eating, moving, cultural activities, physical exercise, services and healthcare: [bit.ly/fifmins].

In the first 8 months of 2024, 205 requests were made by members of the public for officials to act against instances of illegal or inconsiderate parking along **Leith Walk**. Two of these related to parking on the tramway. Officers say the situation has improved thanks to a prominent enforcement presence, introduction of the Controlled Parking Zone in Leith, and successful implementation of citywide parking prohibitions relating to footways, double parking and parking at dropped kerbs. *Spurtle* suspects the figure of 205 requests significantly under-represents the extent of the problem.

A 12-week Council consultation on the latest draft of its **visitor levy scheme** will run until 15 Dec. There are questions about **what kind of visitors** should pay how much for how long in what sort of accommodation, and on how the money should be spent to **improve Edinburgh**. If agreed in 2025 and initiated in summer 2026, officials say the scheme could raise **£100m by 2030**; enough, *Spurtle* estimates, to fix between 1.46m and 2.18m potholes. To give your views go here [bit.ly/3U5rzdj].

In a review for the *Scotsman* last month of *Alan Wilson's Edinburgh: A New History*, Stuart Kelly concluded, '... finishing with an article on New Town door paint colours from the nigh samizdat community publication *Spurtle* shows the potential for an almost post-modern Edinburgh'. Not sure we understand that but we're choosing to take it as a compliment [bit.ly/WTFsZ].

Edinburgh Council estimates that its project to 'narrow radii' at the junction of **Broughton and Barony Sts**, due to start early this month, could take 102 working days to complete. So, if work begins on 1 Nov it might not end until 1 Apr. Perhaps they are digging with toothpicks.

Broughton History Society meets next on 4 Nov at 6pm in **McDonald Rd Library**. James Bruce will talk about *Sueno's Stone, Forres*. Members free, non-members £5.

More questions than answers about tram safety snag list

In mid-2023, an independent Stage 3 Road Safety Audit made 145 recommendations to improve the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and other road users around the newly completed Trams to Newhaven extension.

Edinburgh Council and the contractor SFN say they will act on only 44 of those recommendations and have not specified whether work on these has begun or finished. Ward 11's Cllr Jo Mowat has since politely frogmarched Council Leader Cllr Cammy Day into promising more information. Until light shines into the murk, interested observers are left to make informed speculations.

There are concerns that a combination of commercial cynicism and public incompetence will again fail Edinburgh Trams. Some suspect too few experienced Council staff, with insufficient resources, remain to sort out too many problems. There is little clarity about who will perform remedial work and who will pay for it.

Spurtle has approached the Council to establish whether a Stage 4 RSA has or will be carried out and, if so, when its findings will be made public.



Noise still annoys and no sign of progress

At the New Town & Broughton Community Council's evening meeting on 14 Oct, local resident Ross MacCallum delivered his assessment of progress to reduce disruptive bus traffic on E London St.

'It's approximately 90 minutes since 4 off-service triple-axle buses drove back-to-back along ELS. It's approximately 16 hours (around 4am) since we had 7 off-service Lothian buses pass within 11 minutes. It's exactly 27 days since I made a freedom of information request for the Council's recent pollution report on ELS. It's just over a year since my most recent petition. It's more than 2.5 years since Lothian Buses promised us fewer than 50 off-service buses a day. It's about 5.5 years since the original petition.

'So far as excessive noise resulting in sleep deprivation between 7pm and 7am is concerned, let me tell you my opinion of what's changed in all this time ... NOTHING.' The campaign continues.



Jams yesterday, jams today and jams tomorrow



Leith Central Community Council has written to Council Leader Cllr Cammy Day calling for joined-up thinking on potential traffic diversions around Leith St (24/03604/FUL).

Storage requirements during the proposed refurbishment and extension of Calton Sq offices at No. 59 (24/03604/FUL) could require partial or total closure of the carriageway for as much as a year.

Locals recall the 15-minute addition to bus-journey times when traffic was re-routed via London Rd, Abbeyhill and Regent Rd during construction of the St James Qtr. There are also doubts about the current Picardy Pl gyratory's ability to cope and knock-on effects further down Leith Walk.

LCCC does not oppose the Leith St project but wants thorough consultation between officials, transport operators, community councils and other stakeholders well in advance of any work beginning.

Too much or too little bark?



There's been a mixed response to recent improvements in Pilrig Park. Everyone welcomes work on new lighting and the promise of further improvements to come. There's less agreement on Council reduction of undergrowth and removal of trees in a bid to reduce anti-social behaviour. Some resent the loss of children's hide-and-seek opportunities, others welcome the loss of similar opportunities for adults.

Meanwhile, in Montgomery St Park there is considerable ill feeling between dog owners and parents of young children who all want to exercise their little ones on the same area of open grass. The former have successfully proved that the ban on dogs there (begun in 1999) has expired and is unlawful. Ward 12's Cllr Rae expects the ban to be reimposed legally within weeks.

Whether that ban will be enforceable is another matter.

In at the Sharpe end

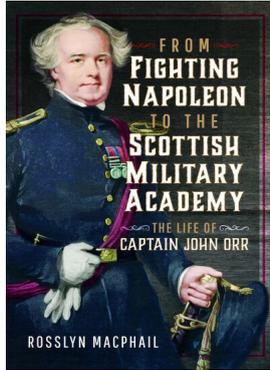
Local author Rosslyn MacPhail's biography of her great great grandfather Cpt John Orr (1789–1879) was published last month.

Based on a previously unseen campaign diary and letters, *From Fighting Napoleon to the Scottish Military Academy* recounts Orr's active army career as a lieutenant in the Black Watch, serving in the Peninsular campaign from 1811 to 1814 (Salamanca, Burgos and the Pyrenees) and then at Quatre Bras and Waterloo (1815), where he was wounded in the knee and later pensioned off.

In 1831, he enrolled as a captain in the Edinburgh Militia and was soon appointed Superintendent of the Scottish Naval and Military Academy on first George St then Lothian Rd. This institution he firmly and successfully led until its dissolution in 1858. He died aged 89 and is buried in Warriston Cemetery.

MacPhail tells the story in elegant prose with assured scholarship. Orr's own accounts are supplemented by well-chosen contemporary memoirs, entertaining newspaper reports of Edinburgh in-fighting, and the evidence of remarkably preserved personal memorabilia. There are also some choice nuggets of Broughton local history. A longer review appears on our website (1.11.24).—AM

ISBN 9781399034449, 232 pp., £25, Pen and Sword Military.



Briefly



We like the fact that cycle hangars serve more than one purpose. This one on **Bellevue St** is also a companionable (if cold) lunchtime bench for Drummond CHS pupils.

Cllr Caldwell reports imminent works along **Leith Walk** will include: replacement of damaged paving slabs; a new reinforced concrete foundation at the **Annandale St** junction; removal of most 'rusty-bucket' planters; removal of superseded cycle-lane paint. At **Elm Row**, he notes work this autumn will: lay new paving where the **muddy desire-line** now crosses grass; create a bi-directional cycleway and deeper bus stops; install bollards between Elm Row and **Montgomery St**; reopen **Brunswick St** for vehicles turning left onto Leith Walk and increase the 'pedestrian plaza'. Cycle parking may follow. The **estimated cost** of the Elm Row work is £856k (incl. interest payable over 20 years).

Blind and partially sighted representatives say Edinburgh Street Design Guidance on tactile paving at continuous pavements is well-meaning but dangerous. **Leith Central Community Council** says adoption of planters by 'random shopkeepers' is 'totally unsatisfactory'. It favours their transfer to local schools.

One and two-storey offices, a showroom and warehouse at **101 and 107A–C McDonald Rd** (opposite the nursery) are on the market. A feasibility study by 56 Three suggests the 0.61 ha site would be suitable for **2 residential buildings of 5–7 storeys**; for example purpose-built student accommodation (235 bedspaces) and 75 private-sector build-to-rent apartments. The site is **earmarked for new housing** in the modified Edinburgh City Plan 2030.

Balfour St fitness trainer, author and horticulturist Tracy Griffen entered the **Golden Spurtle World Porridge Making Championship** for the third and final time last month. Sadly, judges found her speciality stir-fry crumble with miso mushrooms savoury but not stirring enough.

Contrary to expectations reported in Issue 344, **Edinburgh World Heritage Trustees** did not consider amendments to the Articles of Association and governance arrangements at the **annual general meeting** on 7 Oct. They continue to consider feedback received during the consultation process and **no decisions have yet been made**. To help clarify how EWH operates and what progress it has made on reforms so far, Head of Engagement **Wendy MacCadie** has written an article which appears on our website from 1 Nov.

1 Shrub Pl's hungry stomach will soon be filled by Pret a Manger's 4th Edinburgh outlet.

Council unsticks careless chumbles

A Council campaign to remove dropped gum from pavements and reform public masticatory failings ran for much of last month.

Four 'operatives' worked 5 hours per day for over 3 weeks, targeting the top of Broughton St from Little King St to York Pl, Greenside Pl, Leith St, Picardy Pl and Union Pl. About 600m² were cleaned in total.

A £25k grant from Keep Britain Tidy, using a Dept of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs fund, made the project possible. DEFRA – which estimates removing gum costs UK councils £7m per year – claims street cleaning combined with 'specially designed signage to encourage people to bin their gum' can reduce this kind of littering by up to 60% in the first 2 months. As we went to press, there was no evidence of such mind-bending signage but we live in hope.

Local authorities participating in previous years report a continuing reduction in gum littering further down the line. Edinburgh officials will complete their own long-term evaluation in April 2025.

Spurtle welcomes this initiative and hopes the Council finds it effective enough to apply for further funding next year. The rest of Broughton St cries out for attention, as do most pavements around every secondary school in the city.



Please put a penny in the Spurtle hat

Continued from page 1: Just as importantly, subscribers provide us with a source of goodwill and knowledgeable local advice when, for whatever reason, we can't see the wood for the rusty planters.

Since 1994, the *Broughton Spurtle* has been a not-for-profit organisation without commercial, party-political or religious affiliations, run by unpaid volunteers. We aim to keep it as a trusted alternative to increasingly unreliable mainstream media.

Cheques made payable to Spurtle can be left at: Spurtle, c/o The Yard, 61–3 Broughton Street, Edinburgh EH1 3RJ. Electronic transfer details are available on request.

Seasonal pastimes, silly processions

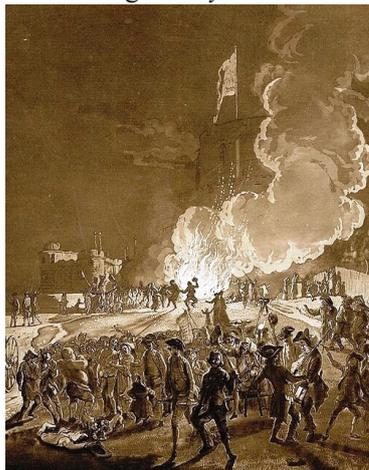
Condensed from the Fife Herald (14 November 1845): —'It would probably be a surprise to many of your readers to be told that on the 5th of November 1845, there were numbers in London so foolish as to gather in crowds to witness the burning of *Guy Fawkes*.

'They were chiefly boys, to be sure, who formed the silly processions, but older, though not wiser, persons lend encouragement. Strange that such absurdities should keep their hold, while any commonsense improvement finds its way so slowly.

'Probably very few, however, know the meaning of what they are commemorating. In Scotland it used to be Wilkes who was so honoured on that day; and a friend has just been telling me that in Liverpool they burn Judas Iscariot.

'The same class of people would very readily be led to burn the effigy of an unpopular minister, and it will be well if want of bread direct their activity in no worse direction.'

The Fawkes Festival, a 'feel-good festival for the senses', runs at the Royal Highland Centre on 3 Nov.



Moreover ...



Stana Nenadic (BA, PhD, FRHistS), Professor of Social History and Cultural History at the University of Edinburgh and long-time resident of Spurtleshire, most recently in London St, died in mid-Sept. She was a familiar face around the eastern New Town, as a commissioner (and former chair) of **Queen St Gdns E**, as a gardener and nature-lover extraordinaire, as a dog-walker of regular routes and times, and as a person with an **unusual gift for picking up new friends** wherever she went. She and her irrepressible terrier Maisie (now living the high life with friends on the South Coast) were a much-loved part of many lives and will be greatly missed. —CR

Signature Pubs Ltd aims to convert the former Six° North bar at **24A Howe St**, plus mews at the back, into 2 dwellings. (24/04478/FUL). **Architect Ian Forbes** says the latest plans address Council Planners' earlier concerns about loss of the pub, preservation of a historic shopfront, privacy and overlooking, daylight and sunlight, and **impacts on architectural character**, a listed building and conservation area. The new approach 'balances heritage conservation with modern living needs'.

If your child is eligible to start school in Aug 2025, you're invited to look round **Broughton Primary School** on 6 Nov, starting either at 9.15am or 2.15pm. Tours of **Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirc** are on 6 Nov at 9.15am and 1.45pm, but please sign up first online from 1 Nov.

The sale of a 0.04 ha development site at **11 Gayfield Sq** (formerly the Doggerfisher gallery) is under way. Detailed planning permission for housing was granted in 2018 (17/03392/FUL), but the project stalled due to construction inflation, high interest rates, and 'challenging S75 contributions for education, trams and affordable housing'.

Following **well-judged input** from locals and other stakeholders, engineering and design consultants **Stantec** have updated their plans to reconfigure the junction at **McDonald Rd, Broughton Road, St Mark's Path** and the entrance to the future and long-anticipated Powderhall housing development. See [bit.ly/3MWZLn9].

Bield Housing & Care proposes converting office space at **79 Hopetoun St** into flats: one 1-bdrm, eight 2-bdrm, one 3-bdrm, 8 parking spaces 24/04371/FUL).

An **Annandale St** resident has recently gained planning permission to form an 'extension to the rear of their property on the ground floor to create a new open plan kitchen and WC facility.' Let us hope too many stopcocks do not spoil the broth.

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Post: Broughton Spurtle, c/o The Yard, 61-3 Broughton Street, EH1 3RJ.
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Will you take a leading role in local democracy?

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Leith Central Community Council

LCCC seeks local people to take key roles as Vice-Chair and Engagement Officer. Guidance on offer from experienced members. **Next meeting at 7pm on 18 Nov in McDonald Road Library.**

<https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>

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