

Spurtle



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2016**

No 250

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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

RBS PLAN – LOCALS RALLY TO MAKE IT NOT HAPPEN

Disillusion has set in with Royal Bank of Scotland's plans for its site between Dundas Street and King George V Park (Issue 249).

Revised proposals became clearer at a public pre-application consultation in late February. Now, residents'

associations and the New Town & Broughton Community Council are deeply concerned at what they see as excessive massing and overdevelopment.

Critics also regret a reduction in open space, views and pedestrian permeability compared to an earlier version of the plan. They say six-storey blocks will loom and lower over the park, and that construction will threaten trees and already unstable foundations nearby.

Paradoxically, NTBCC has praised RBS efforts to assemble an overall master plan for the site rather than to adopt a piecemeal approach, and has lauded the quality of public consultation so far.

RBS is expected to submit an application outlining general uses and overall scale later this month. For more on this story, see our website (15.3.16).



COSTS GO THROUGH ROOF

Many locals have wondered about the enormous scaffold surrounding Bellevue Apartments at 12–20 Hopetoun Street.

It has been put up to allow 'complete roof replacement under cover' by Total Reinstatement Services Stirling. TRS focuses on jobs for UK insurance firms worth between £20k and £500k. Work is expected to be complete by the end of May.



Inside the building, the atmosphere is tense. Soon after the first occupants moved in around spring 2008, problems began to be noticed. These included ponding on the roof, faulty fire doors/smoke vents, and defective wind- and watertightness. The Council has only ever issued an extended *temporary* habitation certificate for the building, although not all proprietors were aware of this at the time they purchased. That expired in 2010 and no completion certificate has been issued since.

Since 2009, residents and their property management firm have been trying to get the insurers to indemnify them against the cost of remedial repairs. There has followed a horrible tangle of disagreements and legal disputes involving various combinations of neighbours, solicitors, factor, insurers, Council officers, the Scottish Legal Complaints Commission and the Financial Ombudsman Service.

All this against the backdrop of a leaky building, delays and scarily escalating costs. No wonder some residents are deeply embittered and suffering consequences to their mental and physical health. We wish all concerned a prompt resolution and speedy recovery.

HOLYROOD HUSTINGS DATE FIXED

Spurtle will host a Scottish Parliamentary election hustings on 14 April from 7.30pm–9.00pm in Broughton St Mary's Parish Church.

We aim to include one candidate from each party standing in Edinburgh Northern & Leith. For a better chance to have your question picked, email or post it to us in advance (including your name and contact details) as soon as possible. Questions will also be taken from the floor on the night.

BRIGHT SPARKS GO THE EXTRA YARD



[Image: Peter Devlin, Devlin Photography.]

Staff and customers from local Marks & Spencer branches joined actress Joanna Lumley (left) at The Yard last month. They helped clean and refill sandpits, painted, planted, and spread new bark around the playground. Their efforts were part of an M&S #SparkSomethingGood campaign to encourage volunteering in local communities. Pictured above is Yard CEO Celine Sinclair. For more, visit [<http://goo.gl/AxAKT8>].

ROGUE HGVs BLIGHT BELLEVUE

Efforts to monitor and control the number of heavy goods vehicles clogging McDonald Place/Street are being hampered by drivers' disregard and officials' inflexibility.

Local residents are frequently disturbed and boxed in by HGVs awaiting their designated delivery slot to Batleys cash-and-carry. Many drivers don't appear to care, routinely ignoring signs and threats of fines by allowing their engines to idle.

CEC officers have promised to investigate, but it now transpires they won't attend on-site before 7am when the problem is often worst (our website 17.3.16). Ward 12's Councillor Nick Gardner is on the case.



Meanwhile, in a mostly unrelated development, Albany Properties Ltd has applied for planning permission to demolish the garages and office at 21 McDonald Place. They hope to replace it with a 5-storey, 14-unit apartment block (our website 21.3.16). We foresee more Batley-related battles over noise and disruption to come.

Briefly



This **stencilled monkey** on Leith Walk has been identified by one local enthusiast as a **genuine Banksy**. If true, it would be worth a fortune. *Spurtle* is sceptical (see our website, 3.3.16). The wording reads: **'Laugh now but one day we'll be in charge'**.

Leith Neighbourhood Partnership has doubled the 'Leith decides' pot to **£44,184**. It will be allocated in grants of up to **£3k and £1k** in the autumn. LNP has also **acknowledged problems** with the name (see Issue 249, p.4) and is now looking at ways to ensure people in **all eligible areas** (including parts of Broughton) know they can participate.

In Issue 249 we reported CEC's refusal of planning permission for 8 townhouses behind **Broughton Rd**. We wondered whether the developer would appeal or try something new. Neighbours spotted **Hugh Crawford**, owner of architects Sir Frank Mears Associates, photographing the site in Mar. Draw your own conclusions.

The **mysteriously missing** communal recycling bin on E. Claremont St – reported gone on 8 Feb (Issue 249) – was re-reported on 1 Mar. CEC's **Senior Recycling Advisory Officer** replied the same day, apologised for **not having known**, and promised to arrange a replacement 'as soon as possible'. Miraculously, it **reappeared without trace** on 14 Mar.

CEC last month assembled a team to coordinate **road and pavement repairs** on main arterial routes. 'Right-first-time' repairs aimed at reducing disruption will cost £120,000 in the City Centre and Leith. **But work will not address** the lunar surface of Leith Walk (Issue 249, p.1) – a major flaw, say local cyclists. To report road/pavement problems, Tel. 0800 232323. See also our website (*Letters*, 9.3.16).

Café Camino on Little King St has reopened under new management, 'with new menu and a **braw new look** inspired by vintage furniture', a happy client informs us. '**The Auld Alliance** is in evidence, too. The new manager is Mimi, a *très belle* French lady who is a **dab hand** with pancakes/galettes'.

Leith Central Community Council (LCCC) seek a temporary minutes secretary. Their next meetings are on 18 Apr, 16 May and 20 Jun (AGM).

Rough night out in good cause

Twelve Broughton Scouts and two leaders joined 230 other scouts and guides from Edinburgh in the first Bethany Big Scout and Guide Sleep Out last month.

Bedding down in the open air in the grounds of George Heriot's School, the Scouts had sought sponsorship from friends and family to make their night of 'roughing it' count.

So far the Scouts have raised over £1,000 for Bethany Trust's essential work with the capital's homeless. Their Just Giving page will stay open until 9 April, and every penny donated goes to help transform a life: [<http://goo.gl/mkiifk>].—
Scott Richards

Something here inside Cannot be denied ...

Residents in properties bounding Forth, Hart, Broughton Streets and Broughton Place are being plagued by thick acrid smoke pouring from a building at the centre of their quadrangle.

The smoke comes from a wood-burning stove, whose chimney is lower than the surrounding tenements. Depending on wind direction, the pollution penetrates nearby homes, variously causing discomfort, nausea, headaches, and asthma problems. The stove's owner is unresponsive to polite requests and enquiries.

However, the stove itself complies with regulations, and Environmental Health officials can only intervene if they are within a property as the smoke blows in. It usually takes them over an hour to arrive following a complaint, by which time the smoke has dispersed. They lack monitoring equipment which can be left in situ.

It's an anomaly which frustrates officials, too, and one they concede will continue to vex as use of these fashionable devices increases in built-up areas.

Residents are now approaching local and national politicians for help to resolve the situation.

St Andrew Square Garden shambles set to continue

Many readers were irked on learning that the *KEYFRAMES* stick-people in St Andrew Square cost £50k of public money (Issue 249).

Similar frustration will greet news that Underbelly Ltd already has planning permission for Christmas-style mud-making structures in St Andrew Square between early November and mid-January this year and at similar times through into January 2018 (Ref. 14/03914/FUL).

Bizarrely, a Council report prepared by officials at the time this consent was being considered argued: 'The proposal would not affect the architectural or historic interest or setting of surrounding listed buildings or the gardens and the proposed works are not considered to harm the character or appearance of the conservation area or that of the World Heritage Site'.

In recommending approval of Underbelly's scheme, the report concluded that 'It is for a temporary period only and will not result in any discernible physical impact to the site in the long term'.

Spurtle would argue that the event's effect on interest/setting/character/appearance is obvious. Furthermore – given that the physical impact to the site of just this one event lasts around 5.5 months each year – it is indeed 'long term'. (Underbelly has 3 months to restore the Garden after removal of temporary structures.) Finally, considering this event in isolation from additional intrusive, obstructive and damaging events held here at other times of the year grossly under-represents the overall effect on the Garden.

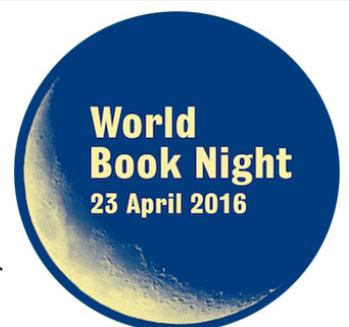
Meanwhile, CEC's public consultation on a Public Spaces Manifesto to better control such overuse has not even begun ... more than six months after it was due to conclude (see our website 11.3.16). This is a shambles.

Big book giveaway

'World Book Night' will be marked on 23–24 April by nine police-box owners giving away a large selection of books donated by the National Library of Scotland.

Established in 2010, the event is the brainchild of Canongate Books' James Byng. It is a UK-wide phenomenon organised by the Reading Agency in London and linked with Edinburgh City of Literature.

Spurtleshire venues are Drummond Place, Canonmills and Croall Place, but others range from St Patrick Square to Newhaven. For further details see [<http://goo.gl/plfQvC>]. — *JRM*



Obituary: Neil McLeod (1929–2016)

Neil Cameron McLeod was born in London, the only child of David McLeod, a boilermaker's manager, and Helen McLeod (née Gordon).

Aged 10, after his father died, he and his mother moved first to Leeds, then Edinburgh around 1943. Here she worked in Symmington's coffee factory on Logie Green Road [our website 12.1.15]. They remained together until her death in 1965.

It was in his late teens that Neil became an active Baptist, attending first Morningside then Dublin Street and finally Canonmills Church in the 1980s.

After school, Neil worked for 'The Store' (St Cuthbert's Co-operative Society) and later as a bus conductor for Edinburgh Corporation Transport from 1966 to retirement in 1992. Around this time he bought the top-floor flat in Bellevue Road where he continued until 2013.

Neil was a quiet, unassuming man, but he had many interests. He had been a Jambo since the 1940s, and stipulated a maroon carpet when he moved into sheltered housing. He was also an avid traveller and regular concertgoer. Keenly interested in current affairs, he was for many years a loyal *Spurtle* subscriber.

He will be missed by a wide circle of cousins, fellow Baptists, Hearts and Bellevue friends, Donaldson Court staff, and carers – particularly Karen and Jackie with whom he had great rapport.—*David Sterratt* [An extended version of this piece appears on our website 1.4.16.]



Look out for: the Dunnock

This month we're looking at an unsung but admirable member of the local avian fauna: the ultimate 'wee brown bird', the Dunnock or Hedge Sparrow. These small grey and brown birds make a living all-year-round, scratching around in low thick shrubs and on the ground. They're not often visible or in plain view, and – unless close or in very good light – they look non-descript. They're more easily seen in spring, when they sing from the tops of bushes and small trees.

How to see them: Dunnocks are common, but their secretive almost ground-dwelling habits make them inconspicuous. They most closely resemble a robin, but the horizontal and slimmer body posture is distinctive. Dunnocks are in fact members of a small distinct family of birds called the Accentors; a group characterised by their inconspicuous brown/grey plumage and unusual mating habits.

Also look out for: Song-birds' nests. At this time of year, spare a thought for our resident birds who, having survived the winter, start nesting early and will usually seek out the thickest untidiest bushes for protection. Leaving some garden areas wild will help protect these nest-sites from cats and other predators, and help maintain populations of our favourite visitors. — *Miles Forde*



Shea's shepherds to show again

A film directed by the late Jack Shea will open the inaugural Edinburgh Traditional Film Festival on 29 April at the Filmhouse.

Shea – who lived in Broughton between 1974 and 2004 – made the documentary *The Shepherds of Berneray* in the Outer Hebrides from 1978–81.

Now that a new print is available, it is once again possible to screen the film more widely. There are also hopes to release additional footage from the 14 hours' worth that remain unused.

Shea's widow, the filmmaker and storyteller Yvonne Baginsky, who still resides locally, will lead a discussion after the screening with Vashti Bunyan who participated in its making.

Cherish it while you can?

Vonny Moyes defended Brutalism in general and the St James Centre in particular on 9 Mar in the *National* newspaper.

He said the 'shabby mall' had been 'caught in a bind, between fashion and land value', and waxed persuasively on the short-sightedness of airbrushing ugliness from our architectural heritage. 'And for what?' he asked. 'Another New Look? A Frankie and Benny's? A food court where you'll eat the same bland food, but in shinier surroundings?'

All good points. But we won't miss it for long.



Briefly

ESPC continue to advertise **5 East Scotland Street Lane** for sale but at the reduced priced of £79,995. They describe it as a 'beautifully converted studio/office' even though it is, definitively, a garage. Now also for sale – at £74,995 – is **8 East Scotland Street Lane**. This is the same owner's other 'beautifully converted studio/office'. *Caveat emptor*.

The **11th Edinburgh NE Scouts** won their District football competition on 5 Mar. '**The Stags**' scored an average of 3 goals per game before beating the 104th from Goldenacre in the final. **Broughton** last won 6 years ago.

Cross and Corner (the popular bar/restaurant at the junction of Eyre Place and Canonmills) has rebranded itself Brandon's. The choice of name honours Tommy Brandon, a successful trainer (1914/22) at **St Bernard's FC**, formerly based in Logie Green Rd and today's RBS car park below Royal Cres.

To no-one's great surprise, developers **Duddingston House Properties** have appealed the Council's refusal of planning permission for a hotel at the **old Royal High School** on Regent Rd (Ref. PPA-230-2178).

Veteran political journalist and *Strictly* hooper **John Sergeant** visited Broughton last month for a BBC1 *One Show* item broadcast on 17 Mar. Weather, **methodological rigour**, and the wit/wisdom of an Edinburgh cabbie were **all equally dismal**. Even so, using a speedgun to monitor traffic on **McDonald Rd** for an hour, Sergeant accurately established that around 50% of vehicles **exceeded the 20mph limit**.

'**Forsyth's finial**', the decorative globe that used to sit atop **Topshop on Princes St** has been in storage for 4 years. A CEC enforcement order in 2015 insisted the feature (removed without permission) be reinstated **by 15 Mar 2016**, but that deadline was missed. Owner **Arcadia Group** now hopes to complete restoration in late June, according to a **letter leaked** to the *Edinburgh Evening News* (24.3.16).

If you're wondering why the **Riparian Rooms** have been shut for the last few weeks, the answer can be found on the **East London St** restaurant's website: 'Closed until further notice for re-branding'.

Work on the **Leith Walk Programme** of improvements between **Pilrig St and McDonald Rd** will run from Sep 2016 to Jun 2017. Work between **London Rd and Picardy Pl** won't start until mid-2018 at the earliest. **Transport and Environment Convener Lesley Hinds** has told LCCC she will **reconsider patching potholes** from Pilrig to Picardy in advance of LWP work.

Moreover ...



Try to contain your excitement. Our photo shows a car park accessed from **Greenside End** behind Baxter's Place. That manhole cover is, we think, the site of a **pump** formerly used to provide water from the **Rood Well** of a chapel (c.1456+), Carmelite Monastery of friars (1520+) and later leper hospital (1591+). It is still marked on the **Ordnance Survey map** published in 1852.

TIAA Henderson Real Estate – developer of the St James Quarter – has applied for permission to attach **two 43m x 3m vinyl banners** to the Leith St Bridge. They would advertise that **John Lewis** is open as usual.

Caledonian Heritable Ltd have gained permission to alter shop fronts at **142–6 Dundas St** (Ref. 16/01006/FUL). In brief, the idea is to match the exterior of a **new restaurant and delicatessen** to a refurbished **Clark's Bar** façade next door.

Edinburgh North & Leith's **Deidre Brock MP** has called for the disused Pelamis Building in Leith to be converted into **film studios and production facilities**. She hopes investors will tap new **Scottish Government funds** and Film Studio Delivery Group expertise. See [<http://goo.gl/7zCtGc>].

Planning permission has been granted to convert the A-listed **Edinburgh City Football Club** premises at 7–8 Baxter's Pl into **four 2-bedroom and one 1-bedroom flats** (Ref. 15/02138/FUL). Planning officials did not share Environmental Assessment officers' concerns about **noise, odour and vibration** from the nightclub and café below the ground-floor flats.

The **diseased elm** on East Claremont St (Issue 249) has had its chips. In fact it *is* chips following **speedy felling and disposal** last month. We shall miss it, and hope the Territorials soon plant a replacement.

Spurtle Team: E. Dickie, J. Dickie, M. Forde, R. Fullerton, J. Hart, M. Hart, D. Hill, D. Jackson Young, A. McIntosh, J. R. Maclean, M. Orr, C. Roussot, L. Rynne, T. Smith, D. Sterratt, E. Taylor-Smith.
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LONDON1 **HOT SHAVE** BARBER

Appointments not necessary,
18 Rodney Street, Tel. 557 2393



Deidre Brock MP
Edinburgh North and Leith



Regular Surgeries

Leith: 1 April
1–2pm, 166 Great Junction Street
Leith Walk: 8 April
3.30–4.30pm, McDonald Rd Library
Royston/Wardieburn
Community Centre:
29 April, 4–5pm
dbrockmp.scot
Tel: 0131-555 7009
deidre.brock.mp@parliament.uk

SOMETHING FISHY

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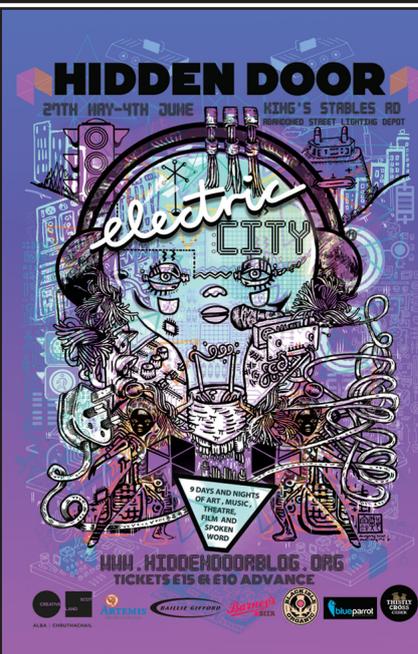
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61-63 Broughton Street
Edinburgh EH1 3RJ.



New Town and Broughton Community Council

New Town & Broughton Community Council represents the views of local residents to City of Edinburgh Council.

You're welcome to attend our next meeting on **11 April at 7.30pm**
Broughton St Mary's Parish Church, Bellevue Crescent
www.ntbc.org.uk