

# Spurtle



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**BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER** Free

## FREE, SEAMLESS Wi-Fi COMING SOON

Queen Street, York Place, Broughton Street, Mansfield Place and Elm Row will be included in a Council scheme to bring free, high-speed Wi-Fi to the city centre 24 hours a day.

The new network will be phased in over the summer and autumn by CEC's partner technology WiFi. The deal is for a 10-year concession, and has been funded to the tune of £5 million as part of the UK Government's Super Connected Cities programme.

The service is designed to cover open, public places rather than residential areas, although some houses may benefit from a 'fluctuation' of the Wi-Fi signal.

Seamless rather than 'hotspot' coverage will be made possible by using CEC-owned street furniture to position 'state of the art' equipment.

Cllr Frank 'Fingers' Ross, Digital Champion, says 'This project is central to the Council's plan for growing the city economy, and encouraging residents and visitors to stay longer and increase their spend'.



Purported benefits of this 'on the go' connectivity include: being able to keep in touch on social media, online shopping and browsing for deals, booking tickets and restaurant tables, reading the *Broughton Spurtle*, consulting public transport timetables, and having access to online banking and Council services.

Obvious disadvantages for users will be the increased likelihood of stepping in dog muck, getting mown down by trams and buses, and bumping into other pedestrians who are also not looking where they're going.

## IS LICENSING FORUM FIT FOR PURPOSE?

New Town & Broughton Community Council (NTBCC) voiced serious misgivings at its May meeting about how licensing is run by City of Edinburgh Council.

The Licensing Forum (lay members) advises the Edinburgh Licensing Board (councillors) on relevant public opinion. But how members are chosen for the Forum is not transparent, and NTBCC fears too many lacking relevant experience are drowned out by those with professional links to pubs and clubs.

NTBCC is particularly irked that, having contacted the Forum with reservations about proposed changes to audibility rules for amplified music (see our website 4.3.16), those reservations were not only discounted but not even minuted. Some at the NTBCC now question whether the Forum is fit for purpose.

On occasions when the Forum *does* suggest reining in licensed premises, critics say the Board's convener – Cllr Eric Milligan – is always very unlikely to agree. Board membership is effectively locked-in for 5-year periods, making it hard to influence from outside.

The Council seeks views on a change which would make neighbours have to prove amplified music in licensed premises causes them nuisance. NTBCC recommends reading this pdf [<https://goo.gl/5NiyWl>] and – before 22 July – emailing a response to [[LiquorLicensing@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:LiquorLicensing@edinburgh.gov.uk)] or posting it to Licensing, City of Edinburgh Council, 249 High St, Edinburgh EH1 1YJ.

## LOOK WHO'S (NOT) HERE



Last summer we reported expectations that four of Antony Gormley's 'Six Times' figures would return to the Water of Leith about now. But unforeseen 'engineering challenges' mean there's a delay – how long no-one can say, but don't expect to see the bathers back at Bell's Mill, Stockbridge, Powderhall or Bonnington this year. The National Galleries of Scotland remain committed to the project, and the cost of the work is still fully covered by a generous patron. For more, see our website (1.6.16).

## NEW LINE-UP IN HOLYROOD

Last month's Scottish Parliamentary elections resulted in constituency victories for Ben Macpherson (SNP) and Ruth Davidson (Con) in Edinburgh Northern & Leith and Edinburgh Central.

Their electoral shares of 46.5 per cent and 30.4 per cent constituted swings away from Labour and the SNP, respectively.

Successful candidates on the Lothian list were: Miles Briggs (Con), Alison Johnstone (Grn), Kezia Dugdale (Lab), Gordon Lindhurst (Con), Neil Findlay (Lab), Jeremy Balfour (Con) and Andy Wightman (Grn).

*Spurtle* faced accusations of political bias on Facebook after allowing Macpherson to expand initially very brief responses to voters' questions (see our website 21.4.16). We refuted such claims. *Spurtle* remains fiercely non-party-political.

## Plenty more room on top

Excitement mounted last month as scaffolding was erected above Top Shop on North St Andrew Street in advance of the return of Forsyth's finial. The fact that Sir Phillip Green is belatedly doing the right thing will no doubt come as a huge relief to staff at British Home Stores around the corner. See Issues 206, 209, 213–14, 219, 251 for highlights in the whole sorry saga.



## Briefly



The (old) new **Botanic Cottage** (re)opened to loud acclaim last month, (see our website 10.5.16). Thankfully, there are **still enough Eeyores** about to extract from the brightest sunbeam a delicious drop of acid rain. 'I still think it looks like a **Barratt executive home**,' grumbled reader David Tant. 'Yet more of the Botanics turned into a park for **Stockbridge yummy mummies** with more money than taste.' For a summary of the story from start to finish, see the **Broughton History Society's Newsletter** No. 36, available soon here: [<http://goo.gl/M3aApx>].

Locals were **not best pleased** when their cars began to be uplifted prior to **filming of Trainspotting 2** in E. Scotland St Lane on 17 May. Council signs had warned them to **vacate 'pay and display' bays** on Bellevue Cres, but **'residents only'** spaces were forcibly freed-up, too.

**New setts** will replace ugly patches on **E. London St**, probably in Nov. once work on **Howe St** is complete.

In other **E. Scotland St Lane** news, we hear that the controversial structure behind **8 Bellevue Cres**, which was at one point advertised for sale as a **studio/office**, is now being advertised for sale as a **garage** following CEC Planning Dept intervention. However, CEC's **Assessors** have decided that, since it is clearly *not* a garage, it should be rated as a **studio/office**. CEC sometimes offers Council Tax discounts on properties which are being **actively marketed**. On the other hand, it sometimes surcharges **twice as much** if the property has been unoccupied for more than a year. This **misbegotten building** is the architectural equivalent of a **pushmi-pullyu**. It seems to us that a buyer would have to pay more for a studio/office they couldn't occupy, or less for a garage they couldn't park in. In other words, it's a perfect **gazelle/unicorn cross**.

**Broughton History Society's** AGM and final Members Meeting of the 2015–16 session is on 6 Jun.

*Spurtle* hears that the mysterious delay in opening **Lidl on Logie Green Rd** will end soon. Problems to do with pavement height at a **street-side loading-bay** have been resolved, and the **cut-price non-Tesco** will now open in Aug.

**Burger Meats Bun** is 'testing the market' by putting its Forth St branch **up for sale**. Long term, the restaurant will focus on **Edinburgh events rather than premises**, and on growing its core business in Glasgow.

## Council's Red Flag boils down to green light

Back in April, the Council reviewed the progress of its two-year-old Red Flag system. This identifies 'an event or emerging related circumstances or issues [that] have the potential to give rise to wider implications for the city and other services, and [issues] a Red Flag communication to the appropriate elected members and officers'.

Twenty-eight Red Flags have been issued since 2014. Three related to George Street; two to St Andrew Square. How many of these, we wondered, alerted elected members and officers to possible detrimental effects of Festival, Fringe and other events-related activities on these Edinburgh World Heritage site venues? We were interested in any concerns raised about either physical or reputational damage.

Following the response to a Freedom of Information request last month, we can now reveal the answer. Precisely none. As the Council review accurately concludes: 'The Red Flag system supports the delivery of successful events in Edinburgh'. A new CEC Events Strategy was due to go before the Culture & Sport Committee on 31 May. We'll report on that in due course.

## 154 McDonald Road – final asking price even lower than first thought

In Issue 251, we could hardly lift our jaw from the floor at news that the substantial 154 McDonald Road had been sold to Kingsford Developments Ltd for only £361k. We sought confirmation and clarification using a Freedom of Information request to City of Edinburgh Council.

We now have answers to our questions.

No guide price was set by CEC. 'As is common practice for the disposal of Council assets where there are a number of potential redevelopment options', the eventual price was determined by the market on the closing date of 8 February 2012.

That price was £485k, which net of deductions for S75 contributions (a levy on the increase in value which follows planning permission) and 'abnormal costs' amounted to £360,709. It reflected 'a number of issues with the property' identified by both CEC's surveyor and the eventual purchaser's.

Sale was completed on 3 December 2014, conditional on planning permission being received.

*Spurtle* has now obtained a copy of the contract between CEC and Kingsford. It appears on our online *Extras* webpage (1.6.16).



## Inquiry into school building blunders

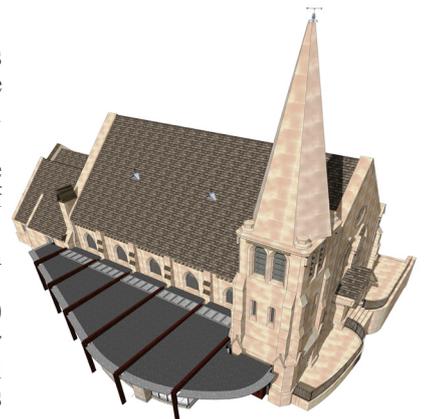
Council Leader Andrew Burns last month announced that CEC will launch an inquiry into the PP1 school buildings fiasco that affected Drummond CHS. An independent chair will be appointed, with work starting after the summer holidays and a report expected 'in a matter of months' (see our website 17.5.16). Officials note: 'This is a very complex matter which the Council is dealing with in a robust and practical manner. The Council will continue to pursue all legal and contractual avenues open to it to ensure that it makes the fullest recovery possible in relation to this matter'. Less a promise, more wishful thinking?

## Onward and outward for flourishing Bellevue Chapel

Bellevue Chapel on Rodney Street seeks planning permission for extensions to the side (on Cornwallis Place) and rear (Ref. 16/02317/FUL).

The proposed development's extra 122m<sup>2</sup> are intended to accommodate a growing number of worshippers and weekday community events. For more on conservation architects Simpson & Brown's plans, see our website (19.5.16).

Originally built in 1878–81 for about £2,600 to designs 'in the Pointed Gothic style' by James Brownlie Wemyss of Leith, the chapel was commissioned for Herr Blumenreich's German congregation of 350 sitters. It was described as 'Bare and uninteresting' by *The Builder*, but Grant (in *Old and New Edinburgh*, 1883) preferred the term 'handsome'.



It was described as 'Bare and uninteresting' by *The Builder*, but Grant (in *Old and New Edinburgh*, 1883) preferred the term 'handsome'.

## Shining example overhead of Corstorphine

Many users of East Scotland Street Lane, and householders overlooking the open area to its north, have long admired the dominant tree at the heart of the allotments. Few, though, may be aware of its identity.

I recently chanced upon a smaller specimen near the John Hope Gateway in the Botanics. It is an *Acer pseudoplatanus corstorphinense* or the Corstorphine sycamore. It is a species of maple, in Scotland usually called the plane-tree.

The Corstorphine version originated in the 15th century and was reputed to be the largest sycamore in Scotland. It blew down in 1998 but was replaced with a cutting which has now matured in the grounds of Corstorphine Kirk.

Perhaps the most celebrated sycamore was the *Tolpuddle Martyrs' Tree* in Dorset, under which six agricultural workers founded the famous early trade union in 1834. That sycamore, aged 334 years, is still extant.

Coincidentally, a local 'sibling' of the Corstorphine sycamore, an *Acer drummondii*, replaced a stricken whitebeam tree in Drummond Place Garden this spring. This maple was named after the distinguished Scottish plant collector Thomas Drummond (1793–1835).

Meanwhile, 'our' sycamore shines yet again, and extends a welcome to all.—  
JRM



## Look out for: Blackbirds

One of Britain's commonest birds (the RSPB reckons there are up to 15 million), Blackbirds are with us against the odds: disturbed by gardeners, dodging traffic; predated by an army of cats, crows, magpies, owls, raptors, and urban foxes. Their only defences are quick reactions and an ear-splitting repetitive alarm-call to drive predators from the nest area or fledging chicks. Despite these dangers, we still enjoy their musical calls in early spring and summer.

The striking black male, with yellow beak and eye ring, is perhaps the most recognisable garden bird. The browner, more speckled hen shows the close family link to thrushes. Blackbirds feed on invertebrates in summer but switch to fruit and berries in the winter. Interestingly, they are migratory, but slip-shift only short distances south, so effectively remain with us all year.

*Also look out for:* The Blackbird's original name was the Ouzel, or Shakespeare's 'Woosel Cocke, so black of hew, with orange-tawny bill' in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. That name currently applies to the closely related and elusive mountain blackbird the Ring Ouzel; and to the unrelated but similarly patterned Water Ouzel (Dipper) – a resilient bird making a comeback on today's cleaner, healthier Water of Leith — *Miles Forde*



## Dim view of the high and mighty Dundas

Whilst *Spurtle* does not condone guerrilla-glueing on listed structures, on this occasion we do have sympathy for the sentiments of former team member Adam Ramsay.

Ramsay recently adhered an unauthorised plaque to the wooden door of the Melville Monument in St Andrew Square, drawing attention to some dubious distinctions of the figure commemorated above. It read:

*Henry Dundas, 1st Viscount Melville*  
"THE GREAT TYRANT"  
1742–1811

*As de-facto ruler of Scotland, he brutally crushed rebellious demands for democracy.*

*As Home Secretary, he succeeded in delaying the abolition of slavery.*

*He remains the last person in the UK to have been impeached for embezzlement of public funds.*

Dundas's domestic arrangements do not bear much scrutiny either.

Historical 'truth' is never set in stone. It will be interesting to see which of Edinburgh's statuesque reputations next comes in for public reassessment.



## Briefly



This sign says it all: **Khushi's Punjabi Restaurant** – a Broughton St institution since its establishment by Mohammad Khushi (snr) in 1981 – has closed for the last time. We wish Mr Khushi (jnr) and family **light-heartedness** from now on. See Issues 194, 196, 205.

**Provincial Property Holding Ltd** has appealed to Scottish Ministers against CEC's refusal of planning permission for **8 townhouses** between Broughton Rd and the Claremonts (Ref. PPA-230-2182). For more, and a search for those **behind the proposals**, see our website (17.5.16).

The **Edinburgh Concert Band** will perform a 'sparkly summer evening of lively music' in aid of **Waverley Care** at 7.30pm on 11 Jun in Broughton St Mary's Parish Church. Tickets £10/£8 available on the door or at: [<http://goo.gl/Jbkqwz>].

On 6 May, a **20-year-old man** was sentenced to 2 years in Polmont Young Offenders Institute for **5 housebreakings** in Cambridge Gdns and Hamilton Wynd. On the evening of 7 May, gallons of police flooded into the grounds of **Drummond CHS**. They arrested and charged a 24-year-old man for a break-in on **Bellevue Pl**. He appeared at Edinburgh Sheriff's Court on 9 May. Theft appears to have spiked recently, with Police reporting **9 business and 4 domestic break-ins** across the New Town between 1 Apr and 8 May. **Motorcycle and moped thefts** abound in the West End just now, but may well migrate this way in future.

Householders in tenements who wish to replace **common-stair lightbulbs** without paying an expert to do so need a special tool to **undo the screws**: either a 2-prong (older) or 3-prong (newer) **Coughtrie key**. A few are available at electrical wholesalers such as Scott Coppola on **W. Bowling Green St** or from the manufacturers themselves: [[www.coughtrie.com/contact/](http://www.coughtrie.com/contact/)]. They cost **about £10**, but are cheaper on eBay. We thank **Cllr Joanna Mowat** for enlightening us on this gripping subject.

NTBCC and the Police are objecting to an application by **Suva at 24a Frederick St** to increase the basement nightclub's capacity from **400 to nearly 900 people**.

**Two wobbly bike-racks** outside Tesco on Broughton Rd have finally been fixed. Our cycling correspondent Tim Smith, who has been **nagging Tesco for weeks** about this, welcomes the stability and says the new arrangement will make it possible to **undo the nuts** if access is ever needed to the **manhole underneath**.

## Moreover ...

The Chair of Royal Bank of Scotland has written back to locals who requested the car park below Fettes Row/Royal Cres be converted to an **undeveloped green space**. He said no, since RBS is losing £50m per week and **needs every penny** it can find.

Details in the above RBS **planning permission in principle** application – expected to be submitted this month – will likely resemble those last seen in a public exhibition on 25 Feb. **NTBCC's unfavourable response** to that exhibition is available at [<http://goo.gl/XHN6VT>].

**Union Gallery** – late of this parish – has reopened at **4 Drumsheugh Place**.

**45 Broughton Street** – formerly Union Gallery – will reopen as **Söderberg**, offering bread, buns, coffee, ice cream, sandwiches, salads, soups, and tea. Swede **Peter Lungquist** is behind the venture, and has his bakery in Edinburgh's **Quatermile** near the Meadows. Get ready for: **Chokladboll** (chocolate ball), **Kanelbulle** (cinnamon bun), **Kardemummabulle** (cardamom buns), **Kladdka** (Mudcake), **Mazarin** (no idea), **Palstanakstaka** (parsnip cake), **Sturdegspizza** (sour dough pizza), **Råfröm** (rye bread), and seven kinds of cookie. Meanwhile, artisan bakery **Archipelago on Dundas St** has a serious din dispute with its upstairs neighbour (see our website 9.5.16).

**Leith Central Community Council** has heard from Transport Convener Cllr Leslie Hinds that **resurfacing** of the badly potholed stretch of Leith Walk between **McDonald Rd and London Rd** will begin once gas pipeline works are complete.

In his **victory speech** after being elected MSP for Edinburgh Northern & Leith last month, **Ben Macpherson** paid handsome tribute to the former incumbent **Malcolm Chisholm**, who had stepped down. Chisholm served this area at **Westminster and Holyrood** from 1992, since when many locals have appreciated his **hardworking, modest and highly principled approach** to politics, whether or not they actually voted for him. *Spurtle* wishes him well in whatever he does next.

Broughton Primary School's **Summer Fair** is on 4 Jun from noon–2.30pm. Expect food, drink, **arts, crafts, bargains, raffle**, sunshine, showers, bumps, bruises, staff with fixed smiles, **general hilarity**. All welcome. Term ends at state schools on 30 Jun.

**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, L. Rogers, C. Roussot, L. Rynne, T. Smith, D. Sterratt, E. Taylor-Smith.  
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**Deidre Brock MP**  
Edinburgh North and Leith



### Regular Surgeries

**Leith:** 3 June

1–2pm, 166 Great Junction Street

**Leith Walk:** 10 June

3.30–4.30pm, McDonald Rd Library

**Stockbridge:** 17 June

1–2pm Stockbridge Library

**Royston/Wardieburn Community**

**Centre:** 24 June, 4–5pm

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**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 13 June at 7.30pm**  
Broughton St Mary's Parish Church, Bellevue Crescent

[www.ntbcc.org.uk](http://www.ntbcc.org.uk)