

Spurtle



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2016**

No 257

Tel: 07455 770474

spurtle@hotmail.co.uk

BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

CALTON HILL SAFE AGAIN



The botched Hogmanay closure of Calton Hill last year will not be repeated in 2016/17.

With no apology, fanfare or particular explanation, Festivals and Events Champion Councillor Richard Lewis announced last month that the area will remain open on 31 December, with only a small firework launch site being stewarded.

Utter disarray surrounded the closure last year, with free access to the hill withdrawn at the instigation of Hogmanay organiser Unique Events against a background of unexceptional wintry weather and disappointing ticket sales for Princes Street. Key decision-makers were not informed, and the requisite legal arrangements were hurried through at the last moment following awkward questions from *Spurtle* and others (our website, 27–30.12.15; Issue 248).

However, if you imagine CEC has had a complete change of heart, think again. Access to Calton Hill during the Torchlight Procession on 30 December will be limited to those with paid-for torches and wristbands.

‘Interesting,’ observes *Spurtle* team member Lisa Rogers, ‘that such a popular public space is intermittently unsafe when cash is involved’.

SANDY HILL – DEVELOPERS WIN ON APPEAL

Locals responded with various degrees of anger, incomprehension and dismay to news last month that plans for eight townhouses on ‘Sandy Hill’ had been consented on appeal.

The Scottish Government’s Reporter overturned City of Edinburgh Council’s earlier, unanimous refusal of planning permission.

He found that the development would not adversely affect the character of the surrounding area (in fact it would improve it), or unduly reduce the amenity of neighbours. It would have a beneficial impact on the local environment, with no evidence of long-term damage to flora and fauna. CEC had not safeguarded the area as an open space in its local plan.

The Reporter imposed new conditions on consent: CEC prior approval of how the bank is to be stabilised and the roots of nearby mature trees protected; Transport approval of access arrangements; limitations to work hours and noise levels. Any one of these could delay Provincial Property Holdings Ltd’s progress here.

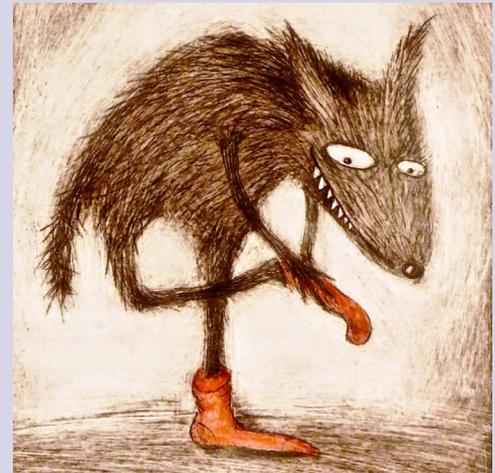
Local campaigner Luke Cotton said the case showed the appeal process is ‘massively flawed, favouring the developers rather than the existing community who have fought passionately to save this vital strip of green space. I am dumbfounded at the lack of communication and transparency

... Ward 12’s Councillor Nick Gardner commented: ‘The Reporter’s decision highlights once again the flaws in the planning process.

‘Planning aims to be fair, reasonable and balanced, but decisions often resolve on balances of judgment and opinion, and, in the case of this Reporter’s judgment once again, a decision weighs the opinion of one person against many, both residents and planners.’

For a longer look at the case, see our website (12.10.16).

SNEAK THIEF CAUGHT RED-FOOTED



Do you experience occasional, baffling disappearances from your washing line? Artist Rachel Everitt’s ‘Lost Socks’ offers a possible explanation (best viewed in colour). Her delightful exhibition *The Story So Far* continues at McNaughtan’s Bookshop & Gallery, Haddington Place, until 24 December (our website 4.10.16).

PEES, POOS AND TOO FEW LOOS

A steady trickle of complaints has reached *Spurtle* over the last three months concerning human excreta in parks, closes, doorways and even unlocked common stairs across Broughton.

The problem may partially be linked to a seasonal rise in homeless people in the area, but probably has as much to do with the wider community getting wrongfooted and crosslegged by the Council’s penny-wise pound-foolish closure of public conveniences.

The toilets at Canonmills were sold in August, and locals in need are now spoilt for choice between the nearest facilities in the Bluebird Café, the Orchard Bar, Glenogle Baths, Stockbridge Library and Leith Victoria Swim Centre [goo.gl/ZmHlnh]. No wonder more people are caught short.

CLOSING DATE
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Briefly



Napier Bathrooms & Interiors made the flesh crawl in Canonmills last month with this Halloween-themed window display. Mystery surrounds the **location of the taps**. For more gore see our website (19.10.16).

The next meeting of the **Broughton History Society** will be at 7.00pm in Drummond CHS on 7 Nov. **John Stirling and Bob Paterson** will talk on 'The Pentland Way – A Walk with History'. Sensible shoes not necessary.

CEC's **Parks, Greenspace and Cemeteries Service** is reviewing management of a small selection of major events held in **Edinburgh's public parks** (2015/16). These include Dushera and Beltane Night on **Calton Hill**, and the Foodies Festival Event in **Inverleith Park**. To take part in their survey, visit [goo.gl/VxfVvk] by 18 Nov.

Lateral City Apartments has revealed artistic impressions of how the Edinburgh Grand at 42 St Andrew Sq will look inside: [goo.gl/nVEDOQ]. The **50 luxury, serviced apartments** will boast 'Clean lines and contemporary fixtures and fittings [integrating] seamlessly with a **decadent colour palette** of olive greens and teal blues. **Velvets, sheers and leather** have been sourced to complement the **unique wallcoverings** and tailored furnishings to achieve an elegance that befits such exceptional [**neo-classical, 1936–42, National Commercial Bank of Scotland**] architecture.' Scheduled for completion in summer 2017, it looks – to *Spurtle's* untutored eye – like a rather depressing Lex Luthor love nest.

Lidl opened its new **Logie Green Rd** store last month, with Cllr Frank Ross cutting the ribbon (our website 13.10.16). The 868m² 'multi-million' investment has created **22 new jobs**, seven more than first announced. In its first week, we hear, it enjoyed a flood of **shoppers** looking for bargains, and a flood of **rainwater** looking for the sea.

In Sept 2015, Inverleith Ward's **Cllr Gavin Barrie** suggested that the meticulous research by reader Paul (@Fountainbridge) (PF) into slow **pedestrian crossing times** on York Pl might be out-of-date after recent adjustments (our website 14.9.15). One year later, PF's latest research shows **waiting times have gone up**. It now takes 3 mins 40 secs to cover 21 metres with a green man. Enjoy every last **teeth-grinding moment** on YouTube here: [goo.gl/sLISMn].

Less haste, more speed

The 'task and finish' working practice – whereby Edinburgh refuse collectors ended their shift ahead of time if they had completed their route – was scrapped last month.

City of Edinburgh Council cited fears that workers might hurry in an unsafe way. Members of the public feared workers might hurry in a job-half-done way.

The Unite union says the change distracts from underinvestment, claiming that in real terms the city's environmental services budget has dropped by at least £17m since 2009.

Meanwhile, at October's New Town & Broughton Community Council meeting, Councillor Lesley Hinds swiftly summarised a long list of new and rehashed initiatives to improve refuse collection and recycling. In fact, the Environment Convener rattled through them at such speed that few people could follow what she was on about, and some wondered whether she was hoping to go home early.

The proposals will all be contained in a report to the Environment Committee which should be available early this month. Our news worms will digest it slowly in due course.

St James Quarter build – Leith Central prepares for the worst

Leith Central Community Council members are concerned at the possible impact of work on the new St James Quarter.

They fear increased levels of disturbance, congestion and wear-and-tear from vehicles associated with the project, particularly along Leith Walk.

They argue that if such problems prove greater here than elsewhere in Edinburgh, there is a strong case for compensation from the developers TH Real Estate.

'This could take the form of paying towards a range of local measures,' says Vice-Chair Harald Tobermann, 'for example construction of proper cycle routes parallel to and perpendicular to Leith Walk, endowments that allow local parks to be improved and run by Friends Groups, and permanent logistics improvements for Leith Walk independent shops.'

LCCC outlined their case to City of Edinburgh Council's Paul Lawrence (Executive Director – Place) in September, who promised to raise the issue with the developer. So far, whilst not exactly jumping for joy at the prospect of compensation, THREE representatives at least met Leith Walk councillors Doran and Gardner to discuss it in October.

Letting his heart lead the way



Feline wanderer Alfie caused a bit of a stir on Broughton Street last month after wandering in and falling asleep at Concrete Wardrobe.

When closing time neared, and no owner could be found, he was released into the peaceful back-greens behind, rather than the rush-hour traffic in front. Two days later he reappeared – a picture of friendliness and self-satisfaction – at his home in Bellevue Street.

The peripatetic puss has 'form' when it comes to absence without leave. He's chipped, refuses a collar, and has a penchant for pubs and gate-crashing weddings at the Mansfield Traquair Centre. His adventures even caught the attention of Canonmills-born Irvine Welsh (see our website 12.10.16).

Books in a box on a street near you

Do you ever find yourself in King George V Park, wishing you had something to distract you from small children terrorising each other and falling off play equipment? Help is at hand.

Last month, Scotland Street resident Maria Wakely set up a 'Little Free Library' outside her home at No. 37. Built by Chris Hellowell and an apprentice from the Edinburgh Tool Library, it was officially opened by Edinburgh author Eleanor Updale on 28 October, and is now a place where passers-by can borrow and donate books in a generous spirit of shared curiosity.

Wakely's first 20 or so titles – for adults, young adults and even younger young adults – will be by authors who have really struck a chord with her: James Joyce, George Eliot, David Almond, Jane Austen, Anita Brookner, 'Lemony Snicket', Alexander McCall Smith and Giuseppe di Lampedusa, to name but a few. There will also be picture books. Wakely was inspired by a friend's pioneering 'Little Library' in the Stockbridge Colonies, but the idea began in the USA as a way to promote literacy, love of reading, and community. There are now around 40,000 such exchanges around the world. You can read more about them here: [goo.gl/htuVSu]. For more on the Edinburgh Tool Library (Spey Street Lane), visit: [goo.gl/rmogWH].

Not different enough for some

Revised plans for three local developments have not won the hearts and minds of neighbours.

The latest proposals for flats at 5 Warriston Road are an improvement on the last set, and would retain part of the distinctive old cottage's river-facing elevation. But the Water of Leith Conservation Trust and others' concerns include potential overshadowing, downhill flooding, and increased urbanisation of the area (Ref. 16/04263/FUL).



Nearby, the developer of 1-6 Canonmills Bridge wants to create one large retail unit or restaurant on the ground floor as nobody's interested in occupying the two smaller ones proposed earlier (Ref. 16/03406/FUL). New arrangements would see residents upstairs accessing their flats at the back, via a car park shared with delivery vehicles.

At 21 McDonald Place, the developer seems to have reduced the height of the proposed residential block by one-storey, but objectors still think it's hideous and say additional smaller flats have been squeezed in to compensate for the loss (Ref. 16/03471/FUL). Other concerns raised earlier have not been addressed.

Look out for: Tawny Owls

Few local birds attract more myths and misinformation than the Tawny Owl – the UK's most common but rarely seen owl.

Myth 1. Owls go Too-wit-too-woo: Most owls squeak or scream or hiss. Tawny Owls (generally males) *do* hoot, and the females call with a 'kewick', but the two sounds probably aren't linked. So a 'too-wit-to-woo' is coincidence. Tawny Owls use a wide range of calls in spring and autumn when setting up or re-establishing territories after chicks have fledged.

Myth 2. Owls are wise: An owl's head is full of two things, neither of them brains: their massive eyes and their superlative hearing system. There's not much room for anything else.

Myth 3. Owls fly silently so prey don't hear them: Owls do fly silently, thanks to special feathers. But the purpose of those feathers is to let owls hear prey moving as they swoop. Owls can seize prey in pitch dark, through snow or thick grass, using their asymmetrically positioned ears and radar-dish facial feathers for '3D' hearing.

Myth 4. Owls can rotate their heads 360°: In fact, it's only 270°. That's enough to scan the countryside in all directions without moving (or fainting).

Tawny owls are formidable predators in gardens and woods, feeding on worms, rodents and any birds foolish enough to betray their presence with the tiniest sound — *Miles Forde*



Image: Al Power, Creative Commons.

End of an era as gallery closes

Barring an astonishing intervention, *I Still Believe in Miracles*, which ended on 23 October, will be the last exhibition at Inverleith House for the foreseeable future.

Budgetary pressure means the Royal Botanic Garden must focus on its core scientific activity and generating revenue, and in this context it reckons cutting-edge modern art doesn't cut the mustard.

Supporters of the gallery staged a 'mass visit' last month in favour of keeping it open, and an online petition is attracting signatures at [goo.gl/Fos56x].

The building served as the first home of the National Gallery of Scotland's Gallery of Modern Art from 1960-84, but under RBGE ownership it has hosted thought-provoking, inspiring, confusing and occasionally bloody irritating exhibitions from 1986 to the present day.

There are fears that Inverleith House may now become a profitable wedding venue, restricting public access to a much loved architectural space and a wonderful setting for cultural activity. Social-media suggestions for its future have included charging for admission, better publicity, more populist exhibitions, exhibiting original works for sale, and widening the offer to include music.

For an affectionate retrospective, see Claremont resident Fay Young's blog post at: [goo.gl/afw4WC].



Photo: Phoebe Grigor

Briefly



The 240-bedroom **Marriott Courtyard** hotel at 1-3 **Baxter's Place** is nearing completion, and should be open by **Christmas**. See our website (17.10.16).

Congratulations to Peter Sherry of the **Beehive on Rodney St.** Last month he was named 'Scotland Retailer of the Year' at the **Celebrate British Beer Awards**. Congratulations also to **Narcissus Flowers** on Broughton St. They've been named Florist of the Year by the *Good Florist Guide*.

As Phase 4 of the '**Leith Project**' traffic signals upgrade and carriageway realignment progresses, and once gas works on McDonald Rd are completed, Pilrig St will be closed at the **Walk end** for 7 weeks, starting early in 2017.

The local **community of creatives** (designers, painters, photographers, sculptors, ceramicists, illustrators, furniture makers and set constructors) **open their studios** at 27 Beaverhall Rd on 25 Nov (5-9pm) and 26 Nov (11am-6pm). **Many items to admire and buy.** Entry free.



Spurtle reported on a **self-seeded lettuce** flourishing in the doorway of No. **38 Rodney St** last month (our website 5.10.16). Are readers aware of other **edibles in unlikely places?**

Rampant buddleia around the Dryden Ter rail bridge and the tramsheds adjacent to Dryden St risks **destabilising masonry and endangering passers-by**. After prompts from LCCC and Cllr Gardner, CEC officials acknowledge the problem around the bridge and are liaising with **Network Rail** to cut back growth and check the structure. **CEC Planners** have also been contacted about the listed buildings.

Welcome to **Tribeca Bar and Grill**, the 'New York kitchen' which opened on 1 Oct at 7-11 E. London St. With three branches **already in Glasgow and one in Bruntsfield**, the latest joint offers brunch (8am-5pm), dinner (5pm-10pm), drinks, wines, beers, cock- and mocktails. The **hip Manhattan area of Tribeca** derives its name from the **TRiangle BElow CANal St.** Perhaps *Spurtle*'s latest diner should be renamed **Cirbebro**.

Moreover ...



Drummond CHS pupils won the **Enterprising Maths in the Lothians** competition last month for the second year running. **Congratulations** to Mhairi Dickie, Daniel Farrow, Sara Leszczynska and Benjamin Sterratt who saw off teams from 26 other schools tackling a variety of **mathematical puzzles and problems**, and now go forward to the national final.

Celadon 2 U – a Thai, BYOB, sit-in, carry-out and delivery restaurant – opened last month at **52 Rodney St.** Delicious-sounding dishes include Som Tum, Moo Ping, and Pad Prik Thai Dam Prawns. See: [goo.gl/qUll6v].

The **St James Centre** finally closed on 16 October, and demolition is expected to **begin within weeks.** An enormous Dutch pension fund, APG, bought 75 per cent of the £850 million scheme last month, and TH Real Estate will own the remainder and manage the new **St James Quarter** once it's finished in 2020.

Welcome to another new arrival from Bruntsfield – **Rosevear Tea** at 71 Broughton St. The business specialises in **quality loose-leaf products**, so should appeal to those wishing to abandon their **PG Tips** for the delights of superior Black, Dark, Green, Yellow, White, Oolong and **caffeine-free infusions**, followed, perhaps, by a quick burst of the Golden Needles.



Work to transform **Collective's** City Observatory on Calton Hill into a **new visual art complex** (see our website 26.10.16) begins on 2 Nov. To find out more or donate, visit: [goo.gl/d4BDs3].

Planning permission has been granted for **Collegiate AC** to form a small grassed and paved area between its student accommodation at **6 McDonald Rd** and Hopetoun Cres Garden (Ref. 16/03681/FUL).

Spurtle Team: E. Dickie, J. Dickie, M. Forde, R. Fullerton, J. Hart, M. Hart, D. Hill, A. McIntosh, J. R. Maclean, S. Michael, M. Orr, L. Rogers, C. Roussot, T. Smith, D. Sterratt, E. Taylor-Smith, D. Young.
Post: Spurtle, c/o Narcissus Flowers, 87 Broughton St, Edinburgh EH1 3RJ.



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Edinburgh North and Leith



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Leith Walk: 2nd Friday of the month
3.30–4.30pm, McDonald Rd Library
Stockbridge: 3rd Friday of the month
1–2pm Stockbridge Library
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leithcentralcc.co.uk/meeting-dates



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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 on **14 November at 7.30pm** Broughton St Mary's Parish Church, Bellevue Crescent

www.ntbcc.org.uk