

# Spurtle



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**No 276**

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**BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER**

**Free**

## PLAYGROUND HOURS BID LOST IN THE LONG GRASS

Following temporary closure of Drummond CHS's playground in February, *Spurtle* has been investigating public access here. In Issue 274, we recalled the then Education Convener Cllr Ewan Aitken's 2003 public commitment to renegotiate CEC's contract with Amey in order to guarantee sufficient access out of school hours.



In May we submitted a Freedom of Information request to the Council to establish the outcome of that renegotiation. CEC has now responded formally to say: 'The access arrangements for Drummond High School [sic] reflect the standard hours within the PPP1 contract and there is no record of any subsequent renegotiation to change these hours after the contract was signed.'

Officials have since clarified the minimum hours during which Amey must open the playground. Term time: 7.30am–10pm (Mon–Fri), 9am–1pm (Sat). Holidays: 8am–5pm (Mon–Fri).

By accident or design, the whole issue seems to have been quietly shelved. However, very few people consider that such limited hours, if they were enforced, would be enough to meet demand.

The issue is expected to be discussed at the New Town & Broughton Community Council meeting in August.

## CORBYN BANGS THE DRUM



The recent whistle-stop visit of Jeremy Corbyn MP to the Newkirkgate reflected Labour Party preparations for a Westminster election (see our website 29.6.18).

The Opposition Leader came to lend support to Cllr Gordon Munro (Ward 13), who will stand for election in the Edinburgh North & Leith constituency when the time comes.

Deidre Brock MP won here for the SNP in 2017 with a majority of just 1,625 votes, making this a marginal seat of acute interest to all political parties. So, expect further high-profile visitors and seductive blandishments between now and May 2022 at the latest.

For what it's worth, Mr Corbyn signed the Save Leith Walk petition, and promised, 'Labour will not allow privileged developers to build over the hopes and aspirations of local people.'

## LEITH STREET REOPENS

After an 11-month closure, Leith Street reopened to traffic in both directions (including buses) on 28 July as scheduled. Calton Road reopened, and the George Street diversion ceased.

The London Road/Easter Road/Montrose Terrace gyratory will continue until early September, as will closure of Leith Street's inside northbound lane during construction of the St James Quarter.

Right turns are now banned from Calton Road onto Leith Street and from Leith Street onto Calton Road. Left turns from Leith Street onto Waterloo Place are also forbidden, except for cyclists.

Martin Perry, the Edinburgh St James project's Director of Development, thanked the public for their patience. 'The closure period has enabled us to deliver a high-quality and much-improved environment, which will better serve Edinburgh's pedestrians, cyclists and public transport for years to come.'

Council and developers say the new layout without a central barrier has many advantages:

- wider, safer and more accessible pavements with better crossings
- dedicated two-way cyclepath between Calton Road and Picardy Place (to be extended north in due course)
- resurfaced and partially reconstructed carriageway providing safer and smoother travel for drivers
- new maintenance-light underground infrastructure and utilities.

Critics counter that the pavement remains dangerously narrow at the corner of Leith Street and Waterloo Place, being 2m wide rather than the 4m minimum specified in Council guidelines.

They say conditions for cyclists are disastrously worse south of Calton Road, with bikes forced into motorised traffic on the steepest section of the road. Reducing Leith Street to one lane of traffic in each direction, they say, would have allowed wider pavements and a dedicated southbound cycle lane. CEC's traffic engineers, some claim, expect cyclists to avoid the top of Leith Street by using Calton Road as a safe and convenient shortcut to 'nowhere in particular'.

In *Spurtle*'s view, Leith Street's future success or failure will depend largely on the volume of motor traffic funnelling through it. Here, as elsewhere, the Council's Transformation project will be crucial. It has the potential to determine whether Edinburgh's city centre can become a truly breathable and pleasant environment in which people and active travel are prioritised over motor vehicles.

## Gormleys back next year ... probably

In August 2015 we reported behind-the-scenes efforts by the National Galleries of Scotland to re-engineer and reinstate the missing elements of Antony Gormley's *Six Times* [bit.ly/1E3OnPK].

Curator Julie-Anne Delaney assured us that the four human figures (removed in 2012) would be returned to the Water of Leith at no public cost and without fanfare in 2016.

By May 2017, only the lack of fanfare had materialised. Delaney told us a couple of technical issues identified by engineers had caused the delay (Issue 263). She was 'very hopeful' the Gormleys would reappear in the river in 2018.

Ever optimistic, we contacted Delaney again last month. She said she's confident the figures will be back in the water by this time next year. 'Really good progress' has been made, she says, with City of Edinburgh Council removing certain engineering barriers and Executive Director for Place Paul Lawrence fast-streaming administrative progress.

Engineers are now working with Gormley's studio to design a non-hinged, fixed-platform solution requiring only minor modifications. No new Planning consent is needed. Reinstatement will follow after careful reassessment of each site, considering the best interests of wildlife and any changes to the riverbank since 2012. We'll keep you posted.

## Briefly



Police arrested a 22-year-old man after a **blue BMW** broke through a barrier and mounted the pavement at the foot of **Broughton St** on 22 July. The incident happened at around 3.20pm. Fortunately, no-one was sitting outside the **Cask & Barrel** at the time and no-one was injured. A report will be sent to the Procurator Fiscal.

The Broughton History Society's **new 2018–19 programme** can be viewed here: [bit.ly/2AeYah5]. The first meeting will be on 10 Sept.



Barely a trace remains of **1–6 Canonmills Bridge** after demolition workers took down the old building in June and July. **Non-material variations** to the consented replacement were approved in June. They include removal of projecting balconies over the **Water of Leith** due to a 'potential issue of ownership of airspace'. **Juliette balconies** will now feature instead. Elevations may be found here: [bit.ly/2NIIq0N].

Crombie's on **Broughton St** are raising funds to install a defibrillator outside their shop and to **train staff in its use**. Over 50 other butchers across Scotland are running similar schemes.

In Issues 261 and 274 we reported CEC's refusal of consent for change of use at **50 Broughton St** from grocer's shop to unlicensed food takeaway with a new door and flues to the rear. This case has now gone to appeal with the **Scottish Government** (Ref PPA-230-2228). A determination is expected later this month.

The **Scottish Police Authority** seeks permission to erect a 3-dimensional dual-language sign box outside the **Oifis Poileis Chearnag Gayfield** (Ref. 18/03449/ADV). This will be of immense benefit to any **non-Gaelic speakers** passing through the area.

Drum Brae/Gyle Ward's **Claire Bridgman** last month became the 3rd SNP councillor to resign from the party since Feb. She cited **concern with 'the way the group operates'**, but declined to go into detail. She now joins **3 other Independents**. Across the city, the LibDems have 6 seats, Greens 8, Lab 12, SNP 16, and Cons 17.

## A question of scale

Many thousands took to the streets of central Edinburgh on 14 July to protest against the arrival in Scotland of President Trump (our website 14.7.18). But how many?

Police Scotland estimated around 9k took part; Scotland United Against Trump organisers reckoned the figure was nearer 60k.

Such discrepancies are common at non-turnstiled mass events (like inaugurations). Sceptics argue that the Police – as guardians of public order – invariably downplay disruption to the status quo. Different sceptics say that protestors, particularly political ones, will always overstate their cause's mobilised support.

The truth is that accurately quantifying moving crowds of varying density – whose participants enter and leave at different points, who linger in adjacent streets to avoid the crush or bunk off early to snag or get something to eat – is highly problematic.

Public spaces with known, pre-assessed people-carrying capacities (usually for safety reasons) may be roughly analysed by what percentage appears full or over-full.

Point methods use people on the ground to count the number of marchers passing one or two focal points over a given period of time, and using random sampling to assess any double-counting.

More reliably, Jacob's Method divides a crowd into sections, guestimates the average number of people in each section, and multiplies that average by the total number of sections. It's more easily done from above, and so tends to be applied by those with uninterrupted vantage points (like God), or drones and helicopters (like the Police).

Web-based photo-analysis and mobile-phone tracking may eventually offer greater clarity, but for now the size of crowds continues to fluctuate somewhere between the jostling shoulders of fact, methodology, interpretation, and wishful thinking. *AM*



## New international role for Macpherson

Ben Macpherson, MSP for Edinburgh Northern & Leith, has recently been appointed Minister for Europe, Migration & International Development in the Scottish Government.

Working in support of the Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism & External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop MSP, his focus will be on cross-government co-ordination on the EU, migration policy, fair trade, the Scottish diaspora, and international development (particularly initiatives in Malawi, Rwanda, Zambia, and Pakistan).

'As a committed internationalist, and proud representative of such a diverse constituency, I have an important responsibility to emphasise, enhance, and promote Scotland's position as an outward-looking, European and progressive nation,' Macpherson told the *Spurgle*.

'Of course, my commitment to our constituency will remain as strong as ever, and I will continue to be highly accessible and very active in the community.'



## New lease of life for Leith Walk tram depot

The former tram depot at 165A Leith Walk is being transformed into temporary community and creative spaces.

NHS Lothian, Capital City Partnerships, and 'a Council presence' will move into the gutted and renovated building this autumn, with shipping containers outside being converted for use by local artists and entrepreneurs. Out of the Blue will 'partner' the Council as managers.

The long-term aim is to redevelop the site as mixed-tenure housing by the mid-2020s. Temporary occupants will be able to stay put until 2021.

The regeneration project is worth £1.38M, paid for by the Scottish Government (£750k) and City of Edinburgh Council (£530k).

Meanwhile, late last month, Save Leith Walk activists deplored the boarding-up of vacant properties on Stead's Place. Some used social media to claim the action was a deliberate attempt to make the area seem shabby in advance of a full planning application being submitted to the Development Management Subcommittee (Issue 274). Owner Drum Property said its insurers insisted on secured empty premises, and neighbouring businesses had also asked for this. Critics then slammed Drum's offer to smarten up the boards with attractive designs as manipulative 'artwashing'. Rocks and hard places.



## Tree risks nipped in the bud, mostly

The Potter Tree Consultancy conducted a survey of St Andrew Square Garden for Essential Edinburgh following Storm Hector in June. (Well done, EE, for timely concern.)

Potter's report identified trees at low or moderate risk of failing and injuring someone or something during subsequent severe storms, and urged removal of deadwood from the crowns of 5 wild cherries, 1 common lime, 2 wych elms, and a rowan.

Fungal fruiting bodies and a hung-up branch presented moderate to high risks in another wych elm (recommended for removal and replacement), a red oak, and a London plane. A lean monitor is recommended for a moderately risky English oak.

None of this has deterred residents and visitors from relishing the quiet open spaces of the Garden, which have been comparatively free of commercial noise and clutter for a second year in succession.

Across Edinburgh, locals have noticed some trees' leaves turning brown and falling off early. This is a nutrient-conserving response to prolonged hot dry conditions, and expert Andrew Heald tells us it is particularly evident in trees also experiencing other forms of stress. We counted 12 trees showing such signs in St Andrew Square Garden in mid-July. See this *Scientific American* article for background [bit.ly/2eWRC12].



## Look out for: Cormorants

Hardly a day goes by without these birds commuting over Broughton between their nests on the islands of the Forth and their hunting grounds on various bodies of fresh water within the city. Cormorants are strong flyers and have a slightly goose-like appearance.

Like most successful bird species, they have come into conflict with humans in the past, in this case due to their highly efficient fishing skills. They also have a reptilian manner, and this along with their dark plumage has not endeared them to superstitious fishermen in many countries. The Far East is a notable exception, where traditionally they were trained and used to catch fish.

These voracious predators are closely related to Pelicans, but their hunting method is unique. Propelling themselves underwater with powerful webbed feet, and keeping their wings tucked in, Cormorants are extremely fast and agile. This, coupled with a darting neck, means they can chase and catch even the quickest fish. A seeming evolutionary deficiency is the birds' lack of waterproofing in their feathers; but this reduces buoyancy and allows them to hunt far more efficiently. Wings are later hung out to dry, hence the characteristic pose they often adopt while at rest. — *Miles Forde*



Image: Raju Kasambe, Wikimedia Commons.

## The King and I and Graham Croan Bee

As mentioned in Issue 275, the subject of the 2017 film *The King and I* is Scotland Street's kenspeckle Graham Croan Bee.

The film opens a casement on Croan Bee's world as we enter his astonishing residence and accompany him to a winter garden in Fife. He holds forth on his life and general ethos to long-time friend Juliet Henderson.

Director Daniel Cook describes the film as 'primarily a portrait of an Edinburgh resident and unique character. It gives a glimpse into his fantastical life, seemingly existing in a timeless dream-zone, untouched by the contemporary world.'

Croan Bee's home is devoted to beauty and beautiful things. No matter if the ceiling splinters or dishes gather in an overflowing sink; *All will be well or should be well* is his perspective on things.

Throughout, in salutation to Croan Bee's distinguished career in floral art in Stockbridge and London, snowdrifts of *fleurs immortelles* proliferate throughout the flat, and in the film snowy petals gently fall, linking to his winter conversation with Henderson in the great garden of Glassmount House in Fife.

'The piece employs a mixture of "fly-on-the-wall" camera work and short interviews,' explains Cook, 'presenting a performative dreamworld as well as a self-referential meditation on life, memory and filmmaking.' Its conclusion explains the film's title, and is a quite sublime coup de théâtre.

*The King and I* has won multiple awards worldwide, and an excerpt is free to view at [bit.ly/2LmJY4]. A longer version of this article with additional photographs appears on our website (1.8.18)—*JRM*



Image reproduced by permission.

## Briefly



We first reported plans to cater for passers-by from the **Broughton Rd police box** back in Dec 2015 [bit.ly/2JEDP1K]. Progress has been slow since, but **refurbishment over the summer** suggests Broughton PS parents may at last enjoy a warm glow over the winter months.

As surely as night follows day and **history repeats itself as farce**, a new planning application has been submitted for the garage/dwelling/studio/short-term let located on **E. Scotland St Lane** opposite the tennis courts (Ref. 18/03340/FUL). This time, the owner seeks consent for a **change of use** from domestic lockup to Class 4 business. For chapter and verse on the site's **absurd convolutions** since 2012, see [bit.ly/2NoSuvC]. Any comments should be made to the Council by 10 Aug.

Welcome to East Side Yoga, which opened at **107–109 Broughton St** on 21 July. This new addition to the area's **multifarious attractions** is the inspiration of Ailith Anderson and Rebecca Duncan. Anderson was a founding partner of **Broughton Deli** on **Barony St** in 2006. For details, visit [www.eastsideyoga.co.uk].

Within its **South East Edinburgh Locality Improvement Plan** [bit.ly/2LeUeqP], one of CEC's **place-making objectives** for the city centre is 'to develop advice and support for residents whose **quality of life** is being adversely affected by the high number of holiday lets'. Andrew Mitchell, **Regulatory Services Manager**, was scheduled to report on progress at a public meeting of the **Neighbourhood Partnership** in City Chambers on 2 Aug. *Spurtle* will cover.

Hopetoun Cres Gdns, Inverleith Park, King George V Park, London Rd Gdns, and Victoria Park were among 32 Edinburgh winners of this year's **Green Flag Awards**. Keep Scotland Beautiful's scheme recognises **high-quality outdoor space** and the associated benefits of exercise, improved mental wellbeing, and child development through play.

The **Royal Botanic Garden** cannot resist the capital-wide obsession with festive outdoor **scoffing and swilling**. In addition to the Terrace Café selling drinks, it seeks planning permission for **2** temporary event-related hot-drinks units, **4** food-and-hot-drinks units, **1** food-and-sweet unit, and **1** marshmallow unit from **Nov to Jan until 2020** [see bit.ly/2JUgzIG]. John Hope must be **spinning candyfloss in his grave**.

# Moreover ...



For reasons we don't understand, this item of **street art** has recently appeared on the post-box at the corner of **Nelson St and Abercromby Pl.** *Konijnitje* is the Dutch word for 'bunny'.

On our website, we recently reported CEC's refusal of a retrospective application to install an ATM in a listed building at **20 Broughton St** (11.4.18; 27.6.18). The applicant has **now reapplied** with a revised scheme which omits a glass-mounted plastic surround (18/03044/LBC).

Broughton St's **Firth of Froth** cafe/takeaway bobbed away (on the crest of a wave, we trust) last month. Its successor at No 43, **The White Witch**, is an Italian 'Delicatessen and Aperitif, Takeaway and Sit Down' establishment. Owner **Sara Trequatrini** told the *Spurtle*, 'We are serving magical dishes – and also a magical cocktail for the Festival'. We wish her spellbinding success.

*Spurtle* regular Tim Smith suggests a new sign at the foot of Tesco's **Broughton Rd entrance** advising drivers this is not the correct way to exit. 'Cars entering down that road would certainly not expect to meet someone coming up and there's the **potential for an accident.**' After witnessing various wrong turns and near-misses, Smith has raised the point with local staff on **more than one occasion.** They say any such change can only come from management at a **higher level.**

**McEwan Fraser** has appealed to the Scottish Government against CEC's Enforcement decision and refusal of consent for various advertisements and flagpoles at **130 East Claremont Street** (Issue 273, Ref ADA-230-2011). However, in advance of any published decision, the firm removed the items in late July.



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## LONDON1 HOT SHAVE BARBER

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## LEITH CENTRAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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Nelson Hall, McDonald Rd Library

[leithcentralcc.co.uk/meeting-dates](http://leithcentralcc.co.uk/meeting-dates)



Leith Central Community Council

## Deidre Brock MP Edinburgh North and Leith



Regular Surgeries

**Leith: 1st Friday of the month**  
1–2pm, 166 Great Junction Street  
**Leith Walk: 2nd Friday of the month**  
3.30–4.30pm, McDonald Rd Library  
**Stockbridge: 3rd Friday of the month**  
1–2pm Stockbridge Library  
**Royston/Wardieburn Community Centre: Last Friday, 4–5pm**  
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## Ben Macpherson MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament  
for Edinburgh Northern  
and Leith Constituency



## Constituency Surgeries

(no appointment necessary)

**Every Monday:**  
5-6pm at  
Leith Library  
28-30 Ferry Road  
Edinburgh  
EH6 4AE

**Every Friday:**  
4-5pm at  
Royston/Wardieburn Community Centre  
Pilton Drive North  
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