

Spurtle



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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER

Free

SAFETY FIRST FOR BROUGHTON PRIMARY

Following discussions between Broughton Primary's headteacher, the Tram Works Team, and Council officials, safety measures have been applied around the school to address increased traffic levels caused by diversions (Issue 301).

- Temporary signalised T junction at Broughton Rd end of McDonald Rd. Many want this to become permanent.
- Junction of McDonald Rd and Leith Walk reopened.
- Reduced traffic from/to Morrison Utility Services on Powderhall site during school opening/closing times.
- Improved traffic signalling on Bonnington Rd at Pilrig St/Newhaven St to cut tailbacks.
- Contractors to give 'safety around construction site' talk to classes.
- Count of how many people cross Bellevue Rd to see if additional crossing guide is needed.

Better late than never. But would have been better earlier.

Meanwhile, parents have identified further problems outside the school at the exit from East Claremont St. At peak times, motorists treat the single lane as two, and double-up when turning right onto Broughton Rd. Congestion leads to frustration, impatience, and impetuous manoeuvres. These streets are still not safe for children, especially during dark winter days.



NEIGHBOURS FEAR LOSS OF VIEWS ON DUNDAS ST

Proposals to demolish Centrum and BUPA Houses on Dundas St, and replace them with mixed retail and housing [bit.ly/334kqzk], attracted fierce criticism at a pre-application presentation to the New Town & Broughton Community Council last month.

Neighbours downhill at the adjacent No. 120 said MMMARS's plan to restore the Victorian street line by building forward would block their south-facing windows. Developers' representatives responded that the proposals respect Council daylight guidelines.

Others critics lamented the loss of mature trees on the site, described the massing as 'harsh', and questioned why existing buildings could not be reused. NTBCC itself has not expressed a settled view at this stage.

A full planning application is expected in mid-December.



IMPROVEMENTS EN ROUTE FOR BROUGHTON STREET

As part of the Edinburgh's Spaces for People programme, the Transport & Environment Cmte last month agreed to prioritise pavement widening and an uphill cycle lane for Broughton St (subject to discussion with locals), and pedestrian crossing improvements for the roundabout at Mansfield Pl (subject to discussion with the Trams Team).

The combined cost of these measures is estimated at £112k. These and other projects have been helped by £2M funding from Sustrans in addition to the original £5M granted earlier in the year.

The Council has also undertaken to examine: (1) an uphill cycle lane at the top of Leith St; (2) a suggestion by the New Town & Broughton Community Council that safe cycle lanes to and from the city centre would be better along Montrose Ter and Regent Rd than along London Rd, not least because they would avoid Blenheim and Picardy Pls during tramworks.

The Broughton St and Leith St proposals have been hailed by Better Broughton, a new group of locals collating and presenting ideas on the neighbourhood and how to improve streets for cyclists and pedestrians here (bit.ly/3pQVvsT).

BB is a worthwhile project, a much earlier version of which featured in *Spurtle's* first issue in February 1994 [bit.ly/2Koitah]. It has, however, attracted some comment on social media from sceptics who regard it as bypassing the Council's earlier round of public consultation, circumventing the community council, and being too in thrall to the cycling lobby. These are claims which BB rebuts.



COFFEE ROAST CRACKS LOCAL PATIENCE

Most people have nothing but praise for the lovely smells found in, and emanating from, Elm Row delicatessen and café Valvona & Crolla. But that's changed for some since the Broughton institution – present in the city since 1934 – installed a new electric coffee roaster about a year ago.

Although the fumes produced now waft mostly within the shop, a few escape outside through a vent in the stall riser at ground level.

With the wind blowing in the right direction, the resultant smell can be so strong that it's detectable as far away as Annandale St. For residents in neighbouring tenements it can be overpowering, and customers in adjacent businesses have sometimes been left nauseated and struggling for breath.

'It doesn't even smell like coffee,' one told us. 'It's just too rich. It's horrible.'

V&C's Francesca Contini tells us that most of the deli's customers like the aroma. But managers have already responded to a complaint by limiting roasts to one hour a day from 8.30am. She says the machine complies with regulations, but if any locals experience further problems they have only to get in touch.

Meanwhile, some in the area say they're considering their options, including an approach by residents to Environmental Health.



POWDERHALL STABLES GOOD TO GO

Exciting plans to repair and refurbish the former Powderhall stable block at 165 Broughton Rd have been approved [bit.ly/3kC5Sgj].

New uses for the Category B-listed structure as offices, artists' studios, and a function/café space are intended to complement residential, educational, and green-space uses nearby which will be brought forward later.

Development Management Subcmte councillors agreed that proposals would improve the building's setting, with little impact on its exterior. Changes to the interior would not diminish its overall special interest.

Generally, 'the proposal will be a positive contribution to the coordinated regeneration of the area as identified in the [accompanying] place brief'.

Briefly

In the early hours of 1 Nov, police responded to a report of a house gathering in the **New Town**. Some 30 students were found inside, and all received fixed penalty notices. **Asst Chief Constable Alan Speirs** said, 'House gatherings of any size cause the **virus to spread** and we are asking people to do the right thing and take personal responsibility. [...] Anyone **clearly breaking the law** should be in no doubt that they will be met with a **robust response** from Police Scotland.'

Carson Clark Antique Maps Scotland Ltd, whose removal from the Old Town to **Northumberland St** we welcomed in June 2016 [bit.ly/3nmBUP8], has now been dissolved. It will be missed.

We regret to report that **Le Roi Fou** on **Forth St** *est mort*. These are hard times for restaurants. If you can afford to, please consider ordering carry-outs.

Rapido on **Broughton St** has reopened under new management with a new name. For the avoidance of doubt, it is now called **The Chippy**.

Some 25 new alcohol licences are being sought for the burgeoning **St James Quarter**, despite lying within the Council's supposed **area of overprovision**. It seems minimal nuisance value attached to restaurants (as opposed to large pubs near or below flats) **outweighs medical concern** for the capital's livers.

Are your abs **absent**? Has your bahoochie **ballooned**? When was the last time you touched your toes without using an **extra-long packet of Toblerone**? Tracy Griffen can help. The **Balfour St** personal trainer has recently self-published **Get Fit and Enjoy It** – a guide to effective exercise with no gym. It's suitable for all ... including **reluctant beginners**. Available (£7.99) from Elvis Shakespeare, Hanover Health Foods, and online at [bit.ly/2UvtgS7].

Drum Property Group and CAMVO123 sought **pre-application** public feedback on new ideas for **Stead's PI** last month. Proposals include retaining/refurbishing the landmark red sandstone building at the **Foot of the Walk** for various commercial uses. 'Much needed local housing' linked to **Pilrig Park** would replace the light-industrial units to the rear. *Spurtle* heard muted enthusiasm from locals for the proposal, tempered by **distrust of Drum**.

Three **domestic housebreakings** via sash windows or common stairs occurred in the New Town in Oct. Addresses in **Royal Cres, Northumberland St, and Fettes Row** were targeted. All were significant hauls involving theft of jewellery, in one example worth a **5-figure sum**.

Meal Makers is part of a registered charity connecting volunteers prepared to share an extra portion of **home-cooked food** with older neighbours (55+) who'd like a freshly prepared meal and a **friendly chat**. Areas where the Team currently seeks diners include: **Abbeyhill, Bonnington, Canonmills, Leith, and Newhaven**. Recipients can sign up at [bit.ly/32oFCzO].

What next for old Royal High School?

As we reported online in late October, Scottish Ministers have dismissed two proposals to turn the old Royal High School into a luxury hotel [bit.ly/2Gk4MaN].

That decision's clearest finding was that building two large wings would unacceptably damage the structure's setting. With that, the developers' business and heritage-aesthetic cases crumbled. *Spurtle* hears that a judicial review is unlikely.

Developers' options

We don't know if the developers' arrangement with the Council lets them keep control of the site until 2022, or whether the Council can now rescind the contract.

In early November, Urbanist's Taco van Heusden said the developers would present another hotel proposal. Much has changed over 4+ years, he told *Spurtle*, saying long-term interest-rate projections make a more modest scheme financially feasible.

However, we understand Duddingston House Property's contract with the Council obliges it to offer at least 120 rooms with proof of funding, and how this could be achieved without building (now discounted) substantial additions is problematic. Protestations to the contrary are perhaps more ink than octopus.



Food of love

Those wanting the old RHS as a new home for St Mary's Music School have planning consent until 2023, but must reapply for listed building consent. They will certainly refine their own designs in light of Scottish Ministers' detailed decision.

Thereafter, new contractual arrangements, public scrutiny, and practical building preparations will take time to complete. So it could be 2–3 years at least before work on the ground begins.

The Royal High School Preservation Trust says it's keen to secure public support for whatever optimum proposal is finally agreed. It wants to channel widespread hostility to the hotel scheme into widespread support for something 'better' – a project of national worth for a building of international importance.

RHSPT's William Gray Muir speaks of the school rediscovering its civic worth. He sees it as, 'A beacon for an outward-looking, enlightened, and self-confident Scotland. Not an elite viewing platform. Not an inward- or backward-looking symbol. But a creative engine-house for our future.'

Fit for purpose

SMMS isn't an exclusive private school, as some allege, or a snooty alternative to the City of Edinburgh Music School at Broughton High. It's a *national* resource offering subsidised places according to need to very talented young people from across Scotland. SMMS requires more space. The old Royal High School needs a worthy occupant [bit.ly/3kB6ToO]. The two deserve each other.

Act now to avoid shallows and miseries

A Report to the Transport & Environment Cmte last month detailed a new strategic Vision for Water Management in the city and wider region (bit.ly/3fhPrES).

Edinburgh faces problems here. (1) No one fully understands climate change, the city's water system, or hydrology. (2) Much surface water drains into Scottish Water's network of sewers, beyond Council control. (3) Increased rainfall, non-porous surfaces, and human water usage require costly extra capacity. (4) The key mechanism for change – the Edinburgh & Lothians Strategic Drainage Partnership – lacks a coordinator within the Council to develop/implement the work and find external funding.

We think this is too important for delay or dither. Edinburgh's Vision for Water Management needs effective and properly resourced leadership now.



Guarded approval for next year's Winter Festival

In Issue 300 we reported Underbelly's planning application for scaled-down Winter Festival events in 2020–21 and 2021–22. Following cancellation of this year's programme, only 2021–22 (20 Nov–2 Jan) events were considered and approved by the Development Management Subcmte last month. Proposals for East Princes St Gardens and the Mound, and George and Castle Sts combined attracted 75 public comments, 71 of which were objections.

Councillors imposed conditions or informatics about tree protection, staggered construction times, operating hours, fencing, noise restriction and containment, and power supply. They looked for ways to preserve the grass, minimise conflict between pedestrians and cycle routes, and to preserve taxi access. Cllr Gordon sought assurances that inadequate disabled parking provision would be improved.

On balance, councillors considered 'significant economic and cultural benefits to the city' more important than short-term adverse impacts on nearby listed buildings, Conservation areas, designed landscape, and residential/office amenity.

Rear window and a New Town cat

On what did this fine cat muse, looking out from a high window in Scotland Street upon the Drummond Tennis Club courts, the Giraffe Garden, and the splendour of Broughton St Mary's Parish Church?

Undoubtedly, the weather would have been observed, so changed of late, as well as what still passes for the seasons.

And then, a *paradiso* of birds. Especially the swifts who came to nest here close to this very window. How he wished the humans would have left it open for them to come and pay him a visit ...

Then how, a few years back, he must have exalted in the sublime visitation of the painted lady butterflies who whirled and whorled, for all the world like windblown snowflakes, rejoicing in summer and being.

And how, like his other housebound tribe, he would have yearned to fly out, and turn ecstatic circuits around St Mary's spire, and veer 'to the right and on till morning'. Oh, please, just once, just once ...

And in the meantime, affixed here, he is happy to go on musing. Above all, he would warm to Étienne Currah, aged 13, who made this charming collage and presented it out of the blue one Christmas to the undersigned, who positively purred with pleasure.—*JRM*



Winter Lights

Early darkness, and lamps appear in curtained windows; children head for home, brandishing light-sabres. Tail-lights are strings of garnets.

Candles blaze for Saint Lucy's day, Hanukkah and Diwali shift with the moon. Forests of Christmas trees spring up, wrapped like rockets, primed to burst in a glory of baubles.

White streetlights hiss and hum overhead, cyclists blink their helmet-mounted eyes, a tribe of urban Cyclops. In the pub, a screen flickers across the empty tables.

Chandeliers in the Grand Hotel are all brassy extravagance, necessary in this season of lights that will see us through till Earth's light itself creeps back over our horizon.

Imogen Forster

Christmas not what it used to be

Below is an extract from the Caledonian Mercury, published on 1 January 1791. The full version appears on our website from 1 December.

THE mixture of religion and gluttony, of piety and punch-making, which takes place at this season, has often been a matter of serious consideration.

If I may be allowed to speak freely, I must confess I am no friend to the numerous days of fasting which I find in the kalendar. The use that is made of them cannot be said merely to approach to *abuse*; it is profaneness.

Our days of fasting are distinguished by the dearness of provisions, owing to the great demand from all families; and days of prayer are changed for nights of singing, dancing, and drinking.—Alas! the primitive integrity of our pious ancestors is gone from us.—We employ ourselves in trimming our sweet persons for an hour or two, then hire horses, and ride for an appetite; then sit down to a dinner of which we have the pleasing satisfaction of having got—a surfeit.

They took a single cup of nut-brown ale, to cheer their spirits, and drink *King and Constitution*.—We drink whole bottles and bowls of punch, and wine, and brandy, and the devil himself only knows what, until we can neither speak, stand, nor see.

A modern landlord never thinks he has done his duty, if his guests depart with all their senses about them. But he is happy, if their eyes are so swollen that they cannot distinguish a pavement from a ditch—if their ears are so clogged that they hear not the hours—if their touch is so deadened, that they know not a post from a chairman—if their taste is so debauched, that they mistake rum for pump water—and if their organs of smelling are so impeded in their office, that they know not an out-house from a bed-chamber.

This scene of dissipation generally commences at Christmas, and continues without the smallest intermission till several weeks after New Year's Day, which has, time out of mind, been ever famous for feasting and rioting.—*AM*

Briefly

A new collection of work by the acclaimed Portuguese writer **Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen** (1919–2004) has just been published by **Francis Boutle, London** (ISBN 978183809832). One of its two translators was the talented **Colin Rorrison, late of Bellevue PI**, who died in 2012 aged 28. Subjects in *The Name of Things and other poems* include the sea, politics, and myth: 'A strong voice for difficult times.'

Since our report in Nov on plans for a new 67-bedroom hotel at **12–14 Picardy PI** (Issue 301), more details and visuals have been provided by owner Silvermills Estates & Land and architects Morgan McDonnell. For now, we're persuaded replacement of **unlovely 19th-century extensions** to the rear with something better would not be a bad thing, and provision of an **internal bin store** would improve amenity for locals. Developers aim to complete the project by 2023.

Operating for over 30 years in the capital, **Keith Gunn Electrical Solutions** is now moving into the former betting shop at the foot of **Rodney St**. The firm offers domestic, commercial, industrial, and landlord services, and specialises in **fitting chandeliers**.

A new service for those aged 8+ with **minor injuries** (e.g. sprains, cuts, burns, breakages, bumps to head and face, joints, muscles, nerves, tendons, eyes, bites and stings) less than 14 days old was launched on 2 Nov. NHS Lothian's '**Call MIA**' offers patients an online video consultation with a nurse. The aim is to reduce **hospital overcrowding** during the Covid-19 pandemic. Available 7 days a week from 8am–9pm, it can be accessed by first calling **0300 790 6267**. It sounds perfect for amateurs injured while trying to fit their own chandelier. However, anyone with a life-threatening emergency should call 999 as usual.

Renovations are underway in the former Shamoon's at **50 Broughton St**. In July, Despite 17 neighbour objections, permission was confirmed for a change of use from **retail to hot-food carry-out**, and granted for ventilation via an existing chimney (19/05647/FUL).

Ediston's New Town North application between **Dundas St and King George V Park** attracted 152 comments: 13 pro, 133 against, 7 neutral. Contrary to our previous understanding (see Issue 301), the **New Town & Broughton Community Council** reluctantly objected. Its detailed reasoning appears here: [bit.ly/2HmWcs1].

Parish magazine the *Beacon* reports that Broughton St Mary's church member **Margaret Riddles** celebrated her 100th birthday on 14 Nov. 'Readers may be interested to know that Margaret had a distinguished career in the Navy during the Second World War, becoming a **Chief Petty Officer** in the WRENS. In civilian life she worked for many years as a Civil Service draughtswoman, and she supported the WRVS in voluntary work.'

Moreover ...

A scaled-down pop-up entertainment complex has been approved for the roof of **Waverley Mall** over the Festive period [bit.ly/3jRKYCY]. It *will* feature a large Viking-themed tepee with bar and food truck. It *won't* feature a Waverley-Station-inspired glasshouse, outdoor bar, additional food trucks, outside seating, and **amplified live performances** as first proposed. Councillors weren't swayed by objections relating to **unfair competition for local businesses**. Any Covid-related concerns will be dealt with under separate Licensing regulations.

We regret to report that Nice Stuff on **Broughton St** is yet another casualty of nasty financial times. A **sister branch** continues in the parallel universe that is **Bruntsfield Pl**.

New at **44 Broughton St** is Emmerson, offering lifestyle clothing 'with a bit of quality and everyday excellence'. Stock includes **hats, pants, jumpers, rain jackets, and fleeces** – all informed by owner Alan Reid's understanding of **flexible casual wear** as a PGA professional. A website will follow.

For reasons we don't know, Zoots Hair at **41–43 Broughton Rd** has come a cropper. We **regret the passing** of yet another small independent business. The premises are now to let.

Extensive correspondence between **two Broughton luminaries** has appeared for the first time. Robert Louis Stevenson (born in **Howard Pl** and raised on **Heriot Row**) and J.M. Barrie (sometime resident of **Great King St**) wrote to each other from 1892–94, forming an at times **highly charged 'bromance'**. The two never met in person, despite attending Edinburgh Uni at the same time. Editor Michael Shaw's ***A Friendship in Letters*** is published by Sandstone Press.

Contrary to local misconception, **Little Dobbies** doesn't refer to things city dwellers occasionally find in their back greens and blame on **hedgehogs**. The name in fact belongs to a kind of downsized garden centre. One has just opened on **Raeburn Pl**. Useful for trowels.

As *Spurtle* went to press, **The Engine Yard Ltd** sought planning permission to build 'dwelling blocks' (43 units) within the two Shrubhill tramway workshops (and a new structure in-between) adjacent to **Dryden St** (20/04785/FUL). A detailed Design Statement is available at [bit.ly/39dIXa8].

We wish all our readers a **Merry Christmas and a Happier New Year**. Our next printed issue (No. 303) will appear on 1 Feb, with news and features continuing on the website meantime.

Spurtle Team: E. Dickie, J. Dickie, M. Forde, 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.

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SHARE THE LIGHT

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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
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28-30 Ferry Road
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EH6 4AE

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