

# Outlook uncertain

It was as recently as March that **Spurtle** reported on the problems experienced by households on Forth Street whose windows and gardens back on to Broughton Street Lane. Then, it was the hotel development looming over the other side of this narrow lane that threatened their day-to-day amenity. They made the point that city-centre family living, instead of being encouraged, seemed constantly under threat from commercial interests hungry to develop every scrap of space in the area. By their own efforts, an accommodation was reached. The outlook seemed good.

Now, if a proposal for even more building goes ahead, their outlook will be onto a three-storey, twelve-flat development intended for the open space presently used as a commercial car park. And the site plan actually seems to include the ground occupied by their own back gardens! This is particularly significant for basement dweller Janice Donaldson and her daughter, residents for 14 years, but

they and all their neighbours are sorely worried that even the City Council's own guidelines on Daylighting, Sunlight and Privacy will be breached. They are also questioning the regulations on the minimum distances there must be between adjoining structures. Plans also include an underground car park with unexplained implications for access; and a barbecue area that would be invasive to surrounding properties.

Residents are not unaware of the pressures for change. But this they see as "a huge over-development" of a very small site, originally a mews lane the proportions of which should be restored. It also makes no provision for – and is likely to degrade – open spaces, greenery and the other factors that make for an acceptable quality of life. Not to mention the displacement of vehicles using the existing car park which doubtless will be crammed into ever reducing space elsewhere.

The Council knows that feelings are running high – their answers are awaited.

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New Town  
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 Community Council

**We need a new secretary.** The post is voluntary, but if you have some spare time and are interested in local issues such as planning, transport and environment then this could be the job for you. The Community Council meets monthly and the Secretary helps the Chairperson to organise and run the meeting, co-ordinates information from the sub-committees, contacts speakers and sends out agendas and minutes to members. To discuss the post, please contact Alan Welsh on 225 7876.

## BE A VOLUNTEER AT CONTACT POINT DROP-IN

We urgently need volunteers for evening sessions at our city centre drop-in.  
 Join one of our existing teams on Monday, social activities or Tuesday Art Group.  
 For more information phone:  
 Bernie on 622 1865

**Spurtle** team for this issue:  
 Norma McKendrick, Ken McKay, Gavin MacGregor, John Dickie, Alan McIntosh, Eileen Dickie and Tim Puntis.

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# BROUGHTON Spurtle

June  
 2003

tel - 556 7727  
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Free No 104 Independent

LONDON STREET POST OFFICE TO CLOSE?

## "The loss of our Post Office will be a major setback"

News that the Post Office plans to close its London Street branch



permanently in August has caused local consternation. "This has caused me great distress," says Jean Bell of Bellevue Street, "as I am disabled, although not wheelchair-bound, and will not be able to walk to the other proposed branches."

The Post Office cites falling customer numbers, increasing running costs and the subpostmaster's wish "to pursue other interests" as reasons for closure. We understand that the subpostmaster sees the steep steps up to the front door as a major stumbling-block to reviving the fortunes of the branch. But other shop premises in Broughton Street come on the market quite frequently, with easy access from the pavement.

Could the branch move to more suitable premises nearby – and maybe combine the Post Office business with something else?

"This residential area is home to many elderly people like myself", says Jean Bell, "and the loss of our Post Office will be a major setback to our way of life. The staff are friends and neighbours, and many of us would rather collect our pensions from a friendly face as have to go into town."

The Post Office's month-long consultation period will just about be up by the time you read this. But if you feel strongly about the local branch our MP, Mark Lazarowicz, would like to hear from you – please see his advert on the back page for contact details.

## DRUMMOND STEPS

# Update on the access issue

Following the public meeting it organised on 22nd April, the Community Council has written to the Head Teacher at Drummond Community High. Their letter asks that no decision be taken on closing the through route via the steps at Cochran Terrace without more discussion with the local community, to explore all possible compromises. The Community Council also says that the steps should be retained as part of the urban landscape of Broughton.

Living Streets, the pedestrians'

organisation, has now written to the Head Teacher urging the case for the community route being preserved, as has the Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society.

### A different viewpoint

Peter Gray feels **Spurtle** has taken "a less-than-balanced view of the issue", and gives the perspective from where he lives: "Because Cochran Terrace is not separated from the school by a road, it functions for pupils and others as an extension of the school grounds. We would all prefer if the discipline problem would go away,

but there is little evidence that it will, and an equally small chance, given the nature of the school roll, that community involvement would make a difference either (although I would personally support any such moves)... Living next to a school is bound to be noisier than an office block or a cemetery, and all the Cochran Terrace residents accept this. What they will not accept is an unfair share of the impact. Closing the gate merely evens out this impact across the area."

### Local councillor's position

Continued on page 3



## BRIEFLY

A company called Crown Castle would like to stick an H3G mobile phone mast onto the telephone exchange in East London Street. The School Board at St Mary's Primary (just across the street) has lodged an objection because of the "real or perceived health risk", and because the exchange is next door to the historic Gayfield House and opposite the school, another listed building.



**Annette O'Carroll** has stepped down after over three years as Secretary to the Community Council. Our thanks to her for all the hard work she's done on behalf of New Town, Broughton and Pilrig. We hope she enjoys turning her hand to other things now – including more time being a granny!

**Win a free adult class!** Drummond Community High says that when its refurbishment is finished "the modernised building and its new sports facilities will offer new opportunities to the community". What would you like to see develop at Drummond over the next two years? Complete the questionnaire inside this month's **Spurtle**, return it to the School Office, and you might win a free adult education class.

Local MP Mark Lazarowicz tells us the future of the **Assay Office at 28 Broughton** might be uncertain. The office checks the purity of gold and silver jewellery, and applies the unique Scottish hallmark; but a proposal being considered by the EC could mean the end of this system – threatening 40 jobs in Broughton Street, and indirectly affecting others in the Scottish craft and tourism industry. "I'm asking Government Ministers to make sure this proposal does not go ahead", says Mr Lazarowicz.

After hearing the case put forward by Pilrig residents and Bob Stewart of the Community Council, the City's Planning Committee has turned down Wimpey's proposals for the Shrubhill site – **for the third time.**

## SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

# Know your MSPs

Our Parliament was never so bad as some liked to make out. In the new session there's some new blood to stir things up a bit: but neither old or new can prove their worth unless more of us actually make contact with them

and ask for service!

You can write to any MSP at Scottish Parliament, EH99 1SP. We asked each of our eight for more details (no response from Fiona Hyslop in time to print).



### Mark Ballard (Green)

Green Party shadow minister for Finance and Public Services. Special interests: international development, community planning, sustainable jobs. Phone 348 5927, fax 348 5972. Email mark.ballard@scottish.parliament.uk No surgeries arranged yet; please contact at above numbers.



### Malcolm Chisholm (Labour)

Minister for Health and Community Care. Phone 558 8358, fax 557 6781. Email malcolm.chisholm@scottish.parliament.uk Surgeries on Saturdays, 9am at Leith Library, 12 noon at Stockbridge Library (no appointment necessary).



### Colin Fox (Scottish Socialist)

He has already tabled a bill to abolish NHS prescription charges. Phone 348 6389. Email colin.fox.msp@scottish.parliament.uk Will be holding weekly surgeries across the Lothians – times and venues to follow.



### James Douglas-Hamilton (Tory)

Phone 557 5158, fax 557 6682. Email james.douglas-hamilton@scottish.parliament.uk Surgery on Mondays, 6-7pm at constituency office, 67 Northumberland Street (by appointment only).



### Robin Harper (Green)

Green Party shadow First Minister and Education spokesperson. Special interests: waste and recycling, renewable energy, anything to do with planting trees or cleaning up our environment. Phone 348 5927, fax 348 5927 or 447 1843. Email robin.harper.msp@scottish.parliament.uk To book a surgery, please phone as above.



### Margo MacDonald (Independent)

Special interests: health, and Edinburgh issues. Phone 348 5714, or 248 2001 (constituency office, 12 Torphichen Street), fax 348 6271. Email margo.macdonald.msp@scottish.parliament.uk Surgeries to be confirmed later.



### Kenny MacAskill (SNP)

SNP spokesman on transport, tourism and telecommunications. Special interests: last session he joined cross-party groups on renewable energy, visual impairment, and sport. Phone 348 5722, fax 348 5944. Email kenny.macaskill.msp@scottish.parliament.uk Surgery on Fridays, 9.30-11am at constituency office, 107 MacDonald Road (525 8916).

## HOPETOUN CRESCENT GARDEN

# Botanics founder to be honoured

*Hopetoun Crescent Garden is a remnant of Edinburgh's Botanic Garden as it was before moving down to Inverleith in the early 1820s. Margaret Street writes:*

The Botanic Garden on Leith Walk was established in 1763 by Dr John Hope, the city's Professor of Botany and Materia Medica. He gave notable

service to the Royal Infirmary and to botanical education in Scotland when, through family influence and shrewd timing, he succeeded in getting endowment for the Garden from the Government.

Surprisingly, the 18th century gardener's house, still to be seen in Haddington Place, is not listed of historical interest. Hope himself, an important Enlightenment figure, has no memorial, even at Greyfriars, his burial place – though, at his own expense, he provided the elegant monumental tribute to the great Swedish botanist Linnaeus, now at the Royal Botanic Garden, Inverleith.

Somewhat belatedly, moves are being made to honour the public-spirited Professor Hope by putting a simple memorial in Greyfriars. For anyone interested in helping, the Hon. Treasurer is Mr A J Hugh, c/o 115 Trinity Road, EH5 3LB.

*John Hope and a gardener by John Kay, 1785. The only known portrait of Hope.*



*continued from page 1*

### Local councillor's position

Last month we reported that all the candidates at a hustings for the City Council election agreed to do all they could to stop the steps being demolished. Councillor Trevor Davies (re-elected) has since contacted **Spurtle** to say that it was not his intention to give that assurance. He now says that he personally does think the steps should remain intact, and that "children from other schools

should be allowed to use that route"; but that it is "a matter for the School Board and the Head Teacher to decide".

He has also repeated to us that "a public thoroughfare through the school grounds was, in my view and that of the Council, a hazard to the safety of Drummond pupils and should be discontinued." But no one has yet come up with a convincing argument to support this contention!

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## EVENTS

### SUNDAY 8TH JUNE

Open Day at the Mansfield Traquair Centre, 1 to 4pm. Free guided tours. (Next one after that Sunday, 13th July.)

### WEDNESDAY 11TH JUNE

Organ recital by Nancy Crook, with Feargus Hetherington on violin. 7.30pm at Broughton St Mary's Church in Bellevue Crescent. Tickets £6 (concessions £4) – available at the door.

### SATURDAY 14TH JUNE

Summer Fair 2-4pm in Broughton St Mary's Centre, 7 East Broughton Place. A wide variety of stalls including home baking, bric-a-brac, plants, gifts and children's lucky dip. Admission £1.50 for adults, 50p for children – including cream teas!

### MONDAY 16TH JUNE

Broughton History Society's Members' Night and AGM, 7.15pm at Drummond Community High School. Including latest research on fascinating former Barony Street resident. Visitors welcome (£1): come along and decide whether to join up for the next session, starting in September.

### MONDAY 23RD JUNE

Broughton Road Project Group meeting at 6.30pm in the Community Hut in Redbraes Park, Broughton Road. If you want to get involved in local environment projects please come along, or phone 556 7550.

### SUNDAY 29TH JUNE

Community Clean-Up of Hopetoun Crescent Garden at 12 noon, organised by the Friends of the Garden.

### Betty Ross

As we go to press, we've not really had time to come to terms with the tragic death of Betty Ross in a recent car accident. Betty was a well-kent local face for many years, particularly in the Bellevue and Claremont area where she was active in residents' affairs. Betty was one of the first to back **Spurtle** – and remained a loyal supporter thereafter. Our sympathy goes out to her husband Eddie, the rest of Betty's family, and all her close friends.