

Farewell, community cat!

Agnes Drummond of Melgund Terrace has written us this story:

Many people who lived or worked in the district knew Susie, the little black and white cat who lived in Albany Street. Some of you may have feared the worst when she suddenly disappeared.

I first knew her when she was desperately trying to feed six gorgeous kittens in an unoccupied basement. I helped to provide her with food, but as the kittens grew more adventurous I called in the help of Lothian Cat Rescue. They homed the kittens and spayed Susie, but returned her to Albany Street as they felt she had been out too long to settle into a home.

Over the years Susie settled into the role of community cat. Always wary, yet she knew who her friends were. My sister and I agreed to provide her with food on Saturdays and Sundays, and various people from businesses round about fed her during the week.

Recently life has been more comfortable for Susie. Lorna from

Scottish Ancestry Research made friends with her and even provided a bed for her in the cellar. Eventually, during the winter, Susie actually plucked up courage to venture into the office and sit by the fire. Then disaster struck: the business was going to close. Was the easy life over for Susie? We reckoned without Lorna, a lady with a big heart. She decided she would try to take Susie home with her. Lothian Cat Rescue caught her, the vet gave her a clean bill of health, and Susie, full of indignation, was off to Falkirk.

At first she was shut in the garden shed, complete with bed which she refused to leave. Gradually she relaxed and started to eat. Now she is so happy she has started to make friends with the neighbours.

Good luck to Susie in her new home, and I'd just like to say "thank you" on her behalf to all the people who helped her over the years.

We're sad that Ann Drummond, the sister mentioned in this story, died recently, and would like to send our sympathy to Agnes.

What a life!



When Roslin McPaul moved into Broughton Road in 1988, she'd reached the top of her field as a cardiothoracic nurse. She decided to take the unorthodox step of changing her career to follow her dream. She went back to college, studying and then teaching film production at Stirling and Kansas Universities.

By the early '90s she was working down South with the BBC and independent film makers. She was highly sought as a film producer, director, camerawoman and editor. Some of her most popular projects include the Barnardo's Children

Update, documentaries for the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, and pop videos for bands like INXS.

"Lethal Exposure" was a documentary on Gulf War illnesses. As a result of its screening at the Filmhouse, the programme brought Gulf veterans together and paved the way for self-help groups and questions in the House of Commons. It won the best documentary prize from the Penny Cup Jury in 1997; and "Fierce Films", the production company Roslin set up in Broughton Road went on to win further accolades.

Recent projects have included work with bullied children, people with learning difficulties, underprivileged children and adult learners. She uses film-making as part of social work, to help students with literacy difficulties, or simply as a creative outlet.

Contact Roslin on 557 3457.

Contacts

Malcolm Chisholm MP
555 3636

New Surgery on Saturdays
at Drummond Community
High School at 1pm.

Also at Leith Community
Centre, 9.30 am and at
Royston/Wardieburn
Community Centre, 11.30 am.

BROUGHTON **SPURTLE** aims to:

- provide a contact point for local people who want to get together and change things
- help local action groups publicise their work
- make connections between "the news" and people's own lives in Broughton
- and generally stir things up a bit!

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Broughton Spurtle is
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independent

FREE BOOKS - AT ANY PRICE?



Librarian Annie Scanlon

Librarian Annie Scanlon of Drummond Community High has been pilloried in the mainstream media. She turned up her nose at 250 free books from Everyman Press - an offer made to every state secondary school in the UK, with half the cost being met by Everyman, the other half by the Millennium Commission.

Mrs Scanlon was quoted as saying that this selection of so-called "world classics" was weak on authors from Scotland, USA and the rest of the world beyond Europe - and on 20th century authors in general. Besides, students would be turned off by the dull covers.

"Pandering to the lowest common denominator," pontificated an *Evening News* editorial; and surely a librarian shouldn't have the right to "deprive the school of such a windfall." STV asked two people in the street what they thought of free books for the school being refused: not surprisingly, put like that it didn't sound like a good idea to them! And Education convenor Elizabeth Maginnis was reported as dismissing the librarian's views as "absolute nonsense."

The result - Drummond had to take the books, despite already having many of the classics in more attractive paperbacks. **Spurtle** wanted to get Annie Scanlon's side of the story: when we contacted her she said she was no longer able to comment on the matter. But we've discovered this isn't just one daft local librarian with a bee in her bonnet:

• Drummond's Head Teacher told STV: "We have some reservations about their presentation, and whether they will in fact make the classics more accessible to young people."

• Trish Botten of the Library

Association, in the *Evening News* itself: "Members of the profession have rung to express concern about having a list of 250 hardback classic titles and being expected to put them in the libraries"; paperbacks were more accessible to children.

• Evelyn Smith, librarian at the Royal High School, in a letter to the *News*: "Every title looks dull, inaccessible and boring - hardback books with black and white covers and no illustrations. We live in the Nineties where the visual is all important. These books will do nothing to inculcate a love of reading. The *Evening News* should ask why £8 million has been squandered on books which will, in the main, moulder on library shelves unread."

• The librarian at Perth Grammar School has now turned down the books, criticising Everyman for not consulting before making their selection: "It is up to each school librarian to choose material suitable for his/her library"; the Education convenor for Perth and Kinross agrees, and has supported the school's decision.

Spurtle contacted Theresa Breslin for another informed opinion. She has 30 years as a professional librarian behind her; she's a member of the Scottish Book Trust; and she's won the Carnegie Gold Medal for Literature as a children's author - a role which takes her into schools for workshops. She said Annie Scanlon would be picking books to promote literacy, and to force a selection on her was "an insult to her professionally. This could turn the children off the classics. Young people go for colourful books." If you want young people to browse, and be stimulated to start reading, you don't just cram your shelves full - "weed ruthlessly," she told us, is the advice of the Library Association.

So should we really accept any books for our young folk, just because they're "free" - without looking at them closely? Maybe the spotlight should be shifted off librarian Scanlon, and onto those in authority who gave a knee-jerk reaction to the story as it was first presented?

Age of Consent - whose right to decide?

"Scottish human rights activists reacted with anger when the House of Lords voted on 22 July against equality of treatment for all, on the age of consent." So say Outright Scotland, 58a Broughton Street in a statement which highlights two political turnabouts which affect many people in Broughton and further afield.

The first, the abandoning - for the meantime? - of the Commons decision on reducing the gay male age of consent. The second, the role of the House of Lords in forcing out a decision already made by MPs.

Brian Dempsey of Outright, contrasted the recent views of leading churchman. "The Bishop of Edinburgh (and prospective Scottish Parliament candidate) the Rt Rev. Richard Holloway, was reported to be 'saddened' by the Lords' vote. He rejected the public intervention of the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, who said that young gay men should not be treated as equals with young heterosexual men, heterosexual women, and lesbians. Dr Carey

declared that the law should reflect his own 'strong moral principles' regardless of rights." Outright do not accept that "there has not been enough debate. Human rights are non-negotiable. Recognition of this will help protect young people against exploitation and abuse."

The Government have promised that particular legislation will be brought forward later in the year to reinstate the decision already made by the Commons - and no doubt Outright will be watching.

More generally, it may come as an eye-opener that such heavy weather can be made of the process of Parliamentary decision-making - and by a few worthies, none of them household names and certainly not those we elected to decide on our behalf. Next time, who knows the issue they may decide to have a better understanding of than our own MPs? Maybe the role of those people on the fringes of society is the issue those very MPs should finally be tackling!

Local society in bid to protect our heritage

Spurtle reported in our June edition on the risk of the 18th century Haddington House being demolished if nothing were done to prevent it.

Now, the Broughton History Society have taken matters up with Historic Scotland, the body responsible for 'listing' buildings to protect them from 'unwelcome development.'

Sandwiched between shops and the filling station in Haddington Place, it was originally part of the Botanic Gardens before they moved from Hopetoun Crescent to Inverleith. Now that the Crescent gardens are being restored as part of the Hopetoun Village development, the History Society hope to be able to mark this

piece of local history with interpretation boards for visitors to the new gardens. An expensive project, but one which the Society hopes will have local support - as well as 'Local Groups' funding from the National Lottery if a planned application is successful.

Equally important - the old chimney stack on the site of the former tram works at Shrubhill. Though on the edge of the new Hopetoun Village, it is a local heritage landmark on a site which is critical to the extensive development in the area. This too the Society has referred to Historic Scotland. **Spurtle** will let readers know how they get on.

Stand for the Community Council?

Is the Community Council just a bunch of self-appointed do-gooders? If you think so, here's your chance to change it. Elections are coming up next month. The New Town Broughton and Pilrig Community Council have 16 places to be filled by local residents, with a further 8 members appointed by local resident associations and other organisations.

But - too few nominations means no elections! The closing date for nominations is 29th August: why not stand for election? Nomination forms are available from the Returning Officer, James Sibbet, 19 Northumberland Street (556 3234). Local organisations wishing to be represented on the Council must also register with him by the 29th.

The Community Council discusses local issues and feeds information on local concerns to the City Council and other appropriate authorities. It has the right to be consulted on planning and some licensing issues. Recent concerns have included traffic problems in the City Centre and the development of Hopetoun Village area.

It meets once a month and can take up as little, or as much, time as you are prepared to give.

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Mansfield Place Church

Last month we ran a feature on the future of the Church. This month a public meeting will give local residents a chance to see the full plans and ask questions.

Rosemary Mann, secretary of the Mansfield Traquair Trust, who now own the building:

"An application for planning permission and listed building consent for the restoration and conversion of the Church has been submitted by the Trust.

"What the planning application does not show is how the building and its future occupants, the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), will relate to and interact with you, the community. SCVO and the Trust are keen for the community to be involved in discussions on how the building is to be used."

The public meeting takes place on Monday, 17th August, 6pm in the Broughton St Mary's Church Centre, East Broughton Place. SCVO, the



Phoebe Traquair, creator of the church murals

Trust and the architects will all be represented and happy to answer questions.

CHAPMAN

Scotland's Quality Literary Magazine

CHAPMAN started in 1970, as an 8 - page pamphlet; the next year, it got its first £100 grant from the Scottish Arts Council, and expanded to 28 pages. Last year it was awarded £20,000 from the National Lottery for computer equipment; and the magazine is now a solid 100-page volume of poetry, fiction and reviews.

From its office at 4 Broughton Place, CHAPMAN now also publishes the NEW WRITING SERIES, promoting the best writers from the magazine itself - giving them the exposure of book publication.

The aim remains the same as it has been from the start: "to bring to a wider public the quite astonishing achievements of literary Scotland," in the words of editor Joy Hendry. The magazine seeks to publish the best in Scottish writing: both new work by well-known writers in the context of readable critical discussion, and new writers. English, Scots and Gaelic appear in every issue, reflecting the linguistic diversity of Scotland.

But CHAPMAN has an international outlook too. Recent issues of the magazine have featured contemporary Russian literature, translations from South America, and Catalan writing.

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478 7069
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Live Music Wednesday 9.00pm
Quiz Night Tuesday 9.30pm

BRIEFLY

The pressure is still on the **Health Club in East Claremont Street** to return the premises to how they were before the recent alterations - with a threat to their entertainment liquor licence if they don't. **Spurtle** understands they're arguing that others have been given retrospective permission for just as major alterations - so why not them?

Urban foxes came up at the Bellevue and Claremont Residents Association AGM last month. Some local residents see their increasing presence around their gardens as a threat; others welcome this urban wildlife. Advice from Pest Control at the City Council is to use a proprietary dog repellent if you want to discourage them; and don't leave food around to attract them.

The **take-away van** in McDonald Street is no more. The owner didn't turn up at a meeting of the Licensing Board in July, the suspension of his licence was continued, and Bill Bowes of the neighbouring Place thinks there's no chance of it being re-instated.

The Summer Festival at Scotland Yard is set for Saturday, 22nd August - 11.30 to 5pm. If you want to book a stall, or offer your services as an entertainer, it's still not too late - phone Mike Worobec on 557 8199.

A **History Walk** is being organised by the local history society for the third year running, on Wednesday, 2nd September. This time the Walk will start in the Nelson Hall, McDonald Road Public Library: after a look at the 'Old Broughton' Mural there, guides will take small groups via Hopetoun Crescent and East London Street to Broughton Street. The Walk is free, and there's no need to book: just turn up at the Nelson Hall, 7pm prompt.

Farewell to the Flacks of Hart Street. Gill was a founder member of the Spurtle, and it was she who came up with our title. She and her family have been loyal supporters ever since, delivering bundles of the paper up and down Broughton Street every month. Best wishes for their new, rural life!