

Spurtle



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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

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LOCALS FIGHT FOR LEITH WALK'S FUTURE

Back in March, writes *Pilrig resident Harald Tobermann*, Leith Central Community Council (LCCC) submitted a 13-point objection to the tram traffic regulation order (TRO) for Leith Walk. It addressed issues such as bus-stop locations, bin lorry access, pavement narrowing, retail logistics and cycle provision.

When the Council's response was published in early September, not a single point had been accepted. Apparently oblivious to its own commitment to cut carbon emissions by 20 per cent over the next 10 years, CEC's reasons for rebuttals ranged from *impractical to lacking proper consideration*.

Unsurprisingly, this did not go down well with LCCC. It requested that CEC postpone the TRO until it is clear whether and when trams will run down Leith Walk. It suggested that the intervening time be used to achieve a more holistic design in line with the government's 'Designing Streets: A Policy Statement for Scotland', giving appropriate emphasis to 'placemaking and preventing the dominance of motorised vehicles over all other street users'.

After a short delay, on 23 November CEC moved to adopt the TRO, although it did concede to review the impact of the banned right turn onto Leith Walk from Balfour Street 'post implementation of the plan'. Clearly, the previous piecemeal approach to design has proved neither efficient nor effective in producing good outcomes. Things can only get better. [See also Issue 164.]

'COWBOY'S CHARTER' CONCERNS

Concerned Broughton neighbours are carefully considering the Scottish Government's snappily titled 'Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2011 Householder Permitted Development Rights: Consultation Paper'.

Published on 13 October, it aims to cut wasteful bureaucracy by relaxing planning controls for the 'minor and uncontroversial' development of existing dwelling-houses (particularly single-storey extensions), so removing the need for 20-5 per cent of householder planning applications (see <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/10/13084130/0>).

Sceptics are wary of national legislation replacing an (admittedly) imperfect system of local-government Planning supervision. They misdoubt reduced roles for local knowledge and political accountability. They fear clamjamfrays of jerry-built lean-tos covering Scotland.

Although Part 2 of the document refers explicitly to maintaining 'strict controls for development within conservation areas and within the curtilage of listed buildings', heritage watchdogs are also concerned. How might relaxed planning controls affect 'buffer zones' around the Edinburgh World Heritage Site, for example?

Spurtle approached three bodies – Edinburgh World Heritage Trust, Historic Scotland, and the Cockburn Society – none of whom chose to comment at this point. Written responses to the Consultation Paper are invited by 14 January 2011.

SO LONG, BLITZEN ...



Less a festive reindeer, more a cut-short caribou, this head mounted on the wall of the Sergeants' and Officers' Mess in East Claremont St's Hepburn House is a magnificent if gruesome trophy, long the object of children's fascination from the pavement outside. Standing 51 inches tall, with a spread of 48 inches and 30 points, it has been there for as long as anyone can remember. Spurtle has investigated its links to a bloody past. [Continued, p. 3.]

MORE CROSSINGS NEEDED: WILL COUNCIL FOOT BILL?

If the status and safety of pedestrians are indicators of urban quality of life, writes *David Hill*, then Broughton and its environs could certainly show some improvement. There exist various local spots where additional street crossings would greatly enhance the experiences of those attempting to traverse the area by foot.

For instance, adding facilities halfway down busy Rodney and Broughton Streets would certainly constitute progress for the pedestrian, as would better provision along McDonald Road. Similarly, as it stands, neither crossing East Claremont Street in rush hour nor avoiding the vehicles hurtling round Drummond Place into Great King Street are currently likely to encourage a paean to the motor car. Annandale and East London Streets mostly rely on traffic calming measures, but these seem an ill-conceived compromise. These streets would be better served by zebra crossings.

A new Bellevue crossing is on the cards, but will more follow in these straitened times?

Briefly

Spurtle's AGM will be at 7:00pm on 7 Dec. in Broughton St Mary's Parish Church. **Friends, subscribers, contributors and interested others** not requiring biscuits or power point presentations are very welcome.

The **Broughton History Society's Christmas Soirée** is in Drummond CHS on 13 Dec. 'Look to the future now, it's only just begun.'

Friends of Hillside and Calton Area have elected a new chairman: **Neil MacDonald**, a town planner. 'The group looks forward to a new lease of life under his care,' says **Alastair Cairns**. The next project is raising funds for improvements to, and better use of, **Hillside Gardens**.

Recent aggressive begging in '**Big Foot territory**' at the top of Broughton St ceased after one individual – already banned from approaching within 10 metres of the area – was jailed. In a separate development, Lothian & Borders Police curtailed **children's begging** on Princes St and George St.

A **speeding cyclist** knocked down a blind pensioner on the shared footpath/bike track near Warriston Rd on 22 Nov. After apologising, he rode off, leaving the injured victim still on the ground. **Police have appealed for witnesses**.

Christmas, is not a social or happy time for everyone every time. **Samaritans** can help: Tel. 08457 90 90 90 (9:00am–10:00pm).

Readers wishing to find out more about the **Leith Against the Biomass Plant campaign**, or to sign its online petition, should go to: www.noleithbiomass.org.uk.

Welcome **Gifted** at 109 Broughton St: cards, jewellery, **tasteful, interesting and desirable** gewgaws. The shop has another branch in Stockbridge.

Drummond Civic Association's social event and AGM take place at Columba House, 16 Drummond Place on 8 Dec. at 7:30pm. The speaker is **Dorothy Walsh**, senior conservation officer at the City's Museums and Collection Centre. DCA's 2009–10 *Newsletter* is freely available from Ross on Tel. 558 8574.

Some 170 people sampled 84 wines in 5 hours on 19 November. Broughton St's **Villeneuve Wines** reported good feelings all round (*Breaking news* 22.11.10).

Gallery news – a drift of it – is available at *Breaking news* (23.11.10).

A stencilled comment – **NO POOR ALLOWED** – appeared last month in Multrees Walk, on the Royal Bank of Scotland in St Andrew Square, and on the Balmoral Hotel. But also on the **Glasite Meeting House** in Barony St. The latter's **austere**, kale-reek-haunted interior is **hardly the last word** in extravagance or social exclusivity. **Can any reader explain?**

Flamingo sighted!



Many twitchers searched for the fabled flamingo of Broughton in October and November. Spurtle staff were approached (in the nicest possible way) for clues, but seekers were rewarded only with Cheshire Cat smiles. However, several readers did get into the precious shoogly hat and a Narcissus Flowers staff member picked out the winner on 25 November. Congratulations to Viv Skey for locating the bashful bird in a display window of Threadbare on Broughton St. A £15 book token is on its way with our compliments. All runners-up will receive consolation prizes. (Would spotters from London and Broughton Sts kindly confirm their postal details with Ross on Tel. 558 8574.)

Next steps for KGV Park

A Conservation Statement – including designs for new recreational facilities in the eastern section of King George V Park – will be drawn up by architects Simon Laird and Andrew McRae. Funding will come from Edinburgh World Heritage (as interested in conserving the 'public realm' as the built environment) and drinks giant Diageo (keen to be associated with alternatives to irresponsible youth alcohol consumption). PC Simon Daley was key in securing the latter source. These and other interesting possibilities – including a terraced performance space, concrete ping pong and improved lighting – are detailed in Friends of KGVP's Autumn 2010 *Newsletter*

Art is a friend in need



Pictured is a detail from Maryhill painter Joe O'Brien's *Amicus*, the artist typically exploring Reformation symbolism from a non-sectarian standpoint. This vinyl reproduction appears in the window of 34a Haddington Place on Leith Walk.

Since mid-Nov., around 12 works by prominent Scottish artists have been placed in empty West End shop windows and now Leith Walk in a collaboration between Edinburgh Council and Braewell Galleries to enliven tram-ravaged and recession-hit streetscapes. *Amicus* is the first on Leith Walk, where recent figures suggest 15% of shops lie empty. *Spurtle* thinks it is a brilliant initiative.

Braewell opened its first Edinburgh branch on 19 Nov. at 106 Dundas St. Curator Marcus Macleod currently exhibits mainly contemporary figurative work, and says he has been surprised and delighted by the enthusiastic reaction of CEC, local businesses and public alike. For more details, see www.braewellgalleries.com.

Carpe Diem

From my study window
I see you
below in the garden, a hand
here pruning
or leaning across to snip
a wayward shoot,

a daub of powder-blue in a
profusion of green;
then next moment, you are
no longer there –
only to reappear, this time
perfectly framed

in dappling sunlight, with
an armful of ivy
you've trimmed, topped by
hyacinth blooms,
fragrant survivors of last
night's frost.

And my heart misses a beat
at love for you,
knowing a time will come
when you are
no longer there, nor I here
to watch you

on a day of such simplicity.
Meantime let us
make sure we clasp each
shared moment
in cupped hands, like water
we dare not spill.

Stewart Conn

So long, Blitzen ... continued

The inscription beneath it – polished almost to invisibility – yields clues to another extraordinary being and gruesome events in 2 world wars. It reads:

PRESENTED TO THE OFFICERS OF THE ROYAL SCOTS GUARDS
(THE ROYAL REGIMENT)
BY THE OFFICERS OF THE AFFILIATED CANADIAN 16TH CEF.
SHOT BY CAPTAIN NEVILL ARMSTRONG
ON MACMILLAN RIVER, YUKON TERRITORIES 1925.

Nevill Alexander Drummond Armstrong was born in 1874, the grandson of an Irish baronet in Co. Meath. As early as 1894 he is recorded as a big game hunter, warden, miner, gold prospector, and outfitter in some of Canada's remotest Northwest Territories. From 1901 he led long canoe expeditions up the MacMillan River and Armstrong Creek, later taking his intrepid wife Mary Ann on trips lasting up to 2 years. Some of these adventures (and his introduction to a good-time gal known as the 'Oregon Mare' on account of her whinny 'and other equine habits') he later recounted in: diaries, *Yukon Yesterdays* (1936) and *After Big Game in the Upper Yukon* (1937).

In 1915 he enlisted as a lieutenant with the 16th Battalion ('the Canadian Scottish') of the Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), serving on the Western Front. Promoted in 1916, he applied hunting expertise to the development and (from 1917 onwards) instruction of systematic sniping (regarded by early detractors as 'professional assassination'). He was 4 times mentioned in despatches, in 1919 awarded the OBE, and in 1920 divorced Mary Ann and returned to the Yukon wilds until 1926. (The occasion for the presentation of the caribou head remains unclear.) Armstrong rejoined the military in World War II as Lieut.-Col. and Commandant of the Royal Marine Sniping School, 1942–45. *His Fieldcraft, Sniping and Intelligence* (1940) went through 5 editions and remains an influential military textbook to this day.

A Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, he died in 1954. Supplementary anecdotes, observations, and sources concerning Armstrong, the caribou and the 'Oregon Mare' will appear online soon. *AM*

Chippendale off the old block

Fergus Smith, who runs Second Edition on Howard St, has spent the last few months in a bibliophile's paradise.



He was brought in to inventory, catalogue and price thousands of books in the collection of the Montgomery family who have owned Kinross House in Kinross since the 1820s.

Among the treasures he discovered was a volume about Tweeddale with an accompanying 1813 letter from Sir Walter Scott to lawyer James Wedderburn; and a 'magnificent' Thomas Chippendale's *Gentleman and Cabinetmaker's Director* of 1762, estimated to realise c.£12-15K at sale.

Some works will be auctioned by Sotheby's in London, some by Jane St's Ramsay Cornish on 11 Dec.

Early Call

There are days when the fear of death is as ubiquitous as light ...

TED KOOSER

Hearing the phone I am loath to answer, preferring to be closeted from the world's ills. But when an upstairs neighbour says there's a woodpecker on our seed-feeder we speed to the window in time to catch its black and white stripes and crimson nape-patch before it flies off: a few more rings, we'd have missed it. Now all seems back to normal ... unless the small birds' shrillness signals the sparrowhawk's return.

Stewart Conn

[Both poems in this issue are reproduced from *The Breakfast Room* – published earlier this year – by kind permission of Bloodaxe Books and the author.]

Briefly

In Issue 188 we reported CEC consultation on **New Town wheelie bins**. Some West End groups now reluctantly agree to their introduction on garden-sides of streets, provided **20mph speed limits are imposed**.

Fleeting scenes of a '**snow-covered Blenheim Place**' made it to one version of John Lewis's **Christmas TV ad.**, filmed in July (Issue 185). More can be seen at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YR2gXARHGtk>

Police advise Dundas St residents to **lock up their bicycles** after a spate of thefts from common stairs. *Spurtle* advises Dublin St residents to **lock up their daughters** after a spate of unruly student parties spilling from a 2nd-floor HMO.

Mark Lazarowicz, MP posted to www.hearfromyourmp.com seeking locals' opinions on winter adjustments to Greenwich Mean Time. However, **the accidental omission** of one letter in 'clock' made an *l* of a difference (*Breaking news* 9.11.10).

Lothian & Borders Police's new city-centre **Safer Neighbourhood Team** have now agreed quarterly priorities with members of the public: a problematic Old Town car park, St John's Hill drugs, urination 'and worse' in the Grassmarket.

The **newsagent shop** on the corner of Bellevue Rd and Annandale St is under new management. The owner is considering selling or developing the business.

The **Abbeymount Techbase** in Abbeyhill, and the car park on **Bellevue Rd** are apparently both up for sale. More news when we have it.

Pilrig resident **Marianne Wheelaghan's** substantial **debut novel** – *The Blue Suitcase* – was launched on 25 Nov. See *Breaking news* (17.11.10).

Former **Bellevue Terrace** resident Patricia Mackie's erotic '**romp in the hay**' *Not Only Horses* is to be published soon. See *Breaking news* 1.12.10.

Online, *Spurtle* has been supporting the campaign of Leith Central Community Council's John Hein to retain **late-posting and a franked mail box** on Brunswick Rd. Royal Mail say there isn't enough demand, that alternative services exist nearby, and that business users can pay for collections from their premises '**which cuts out the need to visit a post box or post office branch**' (*Breaking news* 9.11.10). Ward 11's Green **Cllr Maggie Chapman** is the latest politician to lend support. Her motion to full council calling on CEC to act (*Breaking news* 10.11.10) was passed on 18 Nov. '**nem. con.**' (*nemine contradicente* – without objection).

Maria's Kitchen opens at 46 Rodney St in mid-Dec., offering carry-out Mediterranean food, delicacies, and a **warm welcome**.

Moreover ...



Cold weather advice: never underestimate the importance of warm socks and sensible shoes.

On the day **David Mackay** quit as Chairman of Trams in Edinburgh (3.11.10) in order to restore his work/life balance, PR staff strove valiantly to deny he had described the troubled project as 'Hell on wheels': 'He was specifically referring to the unexpected finds (including underground chambers and concrete blocks on Princes St) which delayed progress.' The tram project is of course **groovy**.

Lead was stolen recently from the roof of **St Mary's Cathedral**. Thieves accessed via scaffolding in Cathedral Lane. A theft of lead was also attempted at **Broughton St Mary's Parish Church** but for some reason was aborted with the roll of lead left in the garden.

Brown wheelie bins (garden waste recycling) will be uplifted every 4 weeks during Dec., Jan. and Feb. Times at www.greenboxday.co.uk; email waste@edinburgh.gov.uk; Tel. 529 3030. Those with a real **Christmas tree** to recycle – cut into 5ft lengths and present beside garden waste bin on Jan. pick-up.

Some readers have expressed alarm over the fate of a **floppy-eared domestic rabbit** found on Melgund Terrace in Nov. Temporarily housed chez *Spurtle*, the **Geoffrey Howe lookalike** was the subject of several tweets as we strove to find owners. Regrettably, our later tweets on another subject – a recipe involving **white wine, leaks and flat-leaf parsley** – were misconstrued. The bun had in fact already left with the SSPCA, alive and kicking and if anything **even rounder** than when s/he arrived.

Spurtle wishes readers, subscribers friends, acquaintances and sometime critics a **blithe Christmas** and **weel-daein New Year**.

Broughton's dead caribou ...



New evidence about whodunnit.

SHIRLEY-ANNE SOMERVILLE
MSP – Member of the Scottish
Parliament for Lothians
(Scottish National Party)



SURGERY TIMES:

- Every Monday 10.00–12.00pm at the Scottish Parliament
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Friday advice sessions:
4.00pm Stockbridge Library,
42 Hamilton Place
5.00pm Ainslie Park Leisure Centre
6.00pm Constituency Office

Spurtle Team: John Dickie, MF, Ali George, Elfreda Harrison, Maria Hart, George Hosey, Alan McIntosh, John Ross Maclean, Graeme Robertson, David Sterratt.
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New Town/Broughton Community Council

The Community Council
represents the views
of local residents to
Edinburgh City Council

Next meeting:

6 December
at 7.30pm

Drummond Community
High School (Library).

secretary@ntbcc.org.uk

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