

Spurtle

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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

SCHOOLS SUFFER AS CITY TIGHTENS ITS BELT

Over the last 2 months, *Spurtle* has given extensive online coverage to the campaign by parents, teachers and pupils to head off cuts in the City of Edinburgh Council's schools budget ('Breaking news').

Widespread public and political pressure secured a partial climb-down from a 2.5% cut to a 1% (£2.4m) cut, but with schools already having nothing left to trim except staff and standards, no-one celebrated. In addition, the price of school milk at primary schools will increase by 3p, and proposals for increasing the number of school meals are suspended (saving £1.6m). Community high school budgets will reduce by £655K. Cuts to school transport (£375K) and early years services (£623K) will be made. Charges for community access to school facilities will rise. Services to children and young people will find savings of £849K.

School communities, of course, are not the only ones affected. CEC staff and their 'clients' across all departments face job turmoil and reduced service.

Politicians stress different reasons for the crisis, but factors cited include nationwide recession hitting revenues, funding uncertainty, the Lib-Dem/ SNP Alliance's promise not to raise the community charge, inflexible PPI funding arrangements for schools made by the previous Labour Administration, and changes to teachers' annual sick-pay entitlements.

The City must find £90m over 3 years, and this Budget agreed on 11 February will realise £41m of that in 2010/11. Clearly, further cuts are round the corner.

AXOLOTL EXCITES A LOTL



© Christine Clark: 'Sleep'

An exciting new art gallery opened on 27 February at 35 Dundas St.

Axolotl Gallery occupies a spellbinding suite of lofty rooms which formerly housed the Colonial furnishing store.

It will focus on contemporary figurative and narrative painting, prints, photography and sculpture.

The current exhibition features remarkable works by four young Scots: Christine Clark, Sarah Green, Kirsty Whiten and Sarah Wilson on the theme of 'Life, Death and Sex'.

Axolotl derives from the Aztec for the larval stage of amblystoma, a genus of the salamander sub-order.

BROUGHTON HOT-SPOT RAIDED

Never too far from controversy (Issues 49,147,155,168) the former swingers' hotel, private gentlemen's establishment, and health club at 51-3 East Claremont St was raided on 15 February at around 6pm.

Police arrived in 7 vehicles, battered their way through the front door and searched the property using dogs and powerful lights. Intruders were thought to be hiding in the roof space. At least one man was detained and taken away. 'You'll never read about this in the papers,' said the police officer questioned by a *Spurtle* source. Hmm.

The A-listed property has been abandoned since a serious fire in May 2007. It is believed to belong to Shaf Rasul's Newbridge-based East Coast Property.

NEW FACE TO RUN DRUMMOND CHS



Norma Prentice, Drummond's new Head, will take up her post (date to be confirmed) some time after the Easter holiday. For the last 4 1/2 years she has been Depute Head at Arbroath Academy. Outside school she is married with 2 children (a 17-year-old daughter and 14-year-old son), 2 dogs and a cat, all of whom are looking forward to relocating to Edinburgh. She describes her interests as reading, cooking, skiing, keeping fit and running. 'I've run about 50 marathons, and this year will take part in my ninth London Marathon for the PDSA (People's Dispensary for Sick Animals).' *Spurtle* will interview her in more detail once she's settled.

TESCO WINS THE DAY

Tesco has won planning permission to convert 8 Picardy Place into a Tesco Express on 3 floors (Ref.09/00385/FUL). Councillors followed officers' recommendations at the Committee meeting on 24 February, despite numerous objections by locals and politicians.

Opponents had always recognised they faced an uphill fight as the property already had a retail licence. However, carefully couched arguments about loss of amenity and road safety were dismissed.

Council officers said the plans would not harm the character or appearance of the conservation area. The plans complied with the development plan and there were not compelling reasons to reject them.

The proposal was nodded through subject to assurances about noise from plant, and suitability of shopfront materials.

For more on this story, go to 'Breaking news' online.

Briefly

Broughton History Society will meet next in Drummond CHS at 7pm on Mon. 8 Mar. Gen Harrison will talk on **'Making a Good Impression: the History of Printing'**.

CEC's **Education Services** will leave their base at 154 McDonald Rd by 31 March. Cash-strapped CEC is likely to sell the building. What odds that in 10 years' time, **Spartle** reports new residents in **luxury residential conversions** resenting noise from adjacent Broughton Primary School?

Lynne MacTaggart of **Salon LA** again seeks retrospective planning permission to **beautify her basement** at 74 Broughton St with decking. In Feb. 2008 (Issue 155), on appeal to the Scottish Government, she won a 2-year reprieve for this **stylish and wooden flagstone accessory**.

Just one **disappointing element** to January's Scout football tourney (p.2) – a Leith troop taking the field with two players wearing Rangers strips. **'Willie Ormond will be spinning in his grave,'** remarks coach Scott Richards.

An entry for this year's **latest pavement presentation of Christmas tree competition**. A fine pine on London St on 14 Feb. Any more offers?

A retrospective application to install parasols beside the **George Hotel's main entrance**, and in a café garden to the rear, has been refused and enforced. CEC officials said the proposal was at odds with the **Edinburgh City Local Plan** since parasols detracted from the A-listed building's character, architectural integrity, and setting. Caledonian Heritable – the George's owners – are a shade disappointed.

The narrow path from Bellevue Rd to Broughton Primary School's back playground has been closed. An adjoining wall **bulges alarmingly** and will require replacement. A barrier here is necessary to exclude children from the **alarmingly derelict** B-listed garage behind it. Plans to demolish both structures and provide a temporary protected path through the school car park are being costed.

Changes to Lothian Buses timetables began on 14 Feb. 'Minor' changes affect Nos: **5, 8, 11, 12, 15/A, 19, 34**. 'Major' changes affect Nos: **1, 26, 35, 44/A**. See 'Breaking news' online for details.

NTBCC's Planning Subcommittee has welcomed amendments to the plan for development of the former Shrub Hill House. The **'Leith Walk Lubyanka'** has been improved by articulating it with neighbouring buildings.

Threadbare, formerly bursting at the seams, has expanded to fill additional premises. **'Threadbare Boudoir'** will now also operate from a new studio at 62A Broughton Street. Here you'll find bespoke tailoring, designer knitwear and jewellery, exclusive gifts, personalised dress advice and tips.

Planning system still not transparent?

The *Planning etc. (Scotland) Act* was introduced in August 2009 to help the public shape major developments at an early stage (Issue 174). The Act's pre-application notification process obliged developers to consult neighbourhoods on proposals 12 weeks or more before submission to local authorities. More accountable, responsive and easy-to-process plans were meant to result.

Rezidor's Haddington Place proposal was among the first to follow these provisions, and Leith Community Council (backed by NTBCC) successfully argued for improvements. Later, CEC Planning officials altered the design again, removing hard-won amendments to 'articulation, elevation, fenestration and a portal feature'.

Officials acted legally, but by not promptly telling the original consultees about the latest changes they have provoked indignation. The Act's spirit risks being breached, argue worried community councillors. If continued, CEC's practice could obscure public understanding of planning issues. Key knowledge could again become the preserve of a few well-placed insiders.

McDonald Rd 1: Martin & Frost site plans on view

New plans are in the offing for the old Martin and Frost site, controversially earmarked for development by Unite PLC in 2008–09 (Issues 155-7, 164, 168, 172).

Proposals for a 'residential development with commercial space' – by local architects Hackland + Dore for Foremost Properties (Scotland) LLP – go on display at McDonald Rd Library on 19–20 March, and at a public meeting later in the Nelson Hall there on 22 March from 6.30–7.30pm.

This is a chance for locals to influence a very significant Broughton development at the early pre-planning application stage. Leith Central Community Council (LCCC) will also be present, and are keen to hear residents' views. The earliest date at which a planning application for this proposal can be made is 5 May 2010.

McDonald Rd 2: braking news

Urgently needed, eagerly awaited and long overdue road safety improvements have been made on McDonald Rd outside Broughton Primary School. Some locals, though, are underwhelmed.

Temporary measures which had been promised to include a pavement build-out, flashing lights and chevrons instead comprise 2 reflective signs, a metal 'kerbstone', and – off road – a plastic hurdle and 3 traffic cones.

Blandfield resident Mark Sheffield is particularly concerned that none of the new measures is lit. 'It's my view (and that of neighbours I've spoken to) that what they've done has made the road less safe.' Another local claims some cyclists are refusing to slow, and are even mounting the pavement to avoid waiting.

Others have seen a partial improvement. Traffic heading south is forced to switch lanes or give way, and this has slowed it down.

Cllr Louise Lang stresses that the current measures are temporary. (In fact they will have to be moved slightly to make it easier for bin lorries to access the school.) However, she has offered to approach the Roads Manager and see if anything can be done to make the interim arrangements more obvious to drivers.

CEC is obviously incapable of reacting swiftly and decisively. Let's just hope that its eventual solution is not too little too late.

For background see Issues 163–6, 168 and 'Breaking news' online (1.11.09).

Mixed team's rich seam

The 11th Leith Scouts (based at Broughton St Mary's) were the only team to field female players in every match of the Leith District 5-a-side Football Competition (30 January).

After 3 draws and a win in the league format, the lads and lassies met their nemesis, the 6th Leith (Newhaven), in the Final. Broughton had to beat Newhaven by 2 clear goals to win on points difference.

Captain Campbell Johnstone scored an early goal and then had one disallowed in controversial circumstances with the referee unsighted. Convinced that they were going to do an Andy Murray (the last 11th tourney win was 25 years ago), coaches Scott Richards and John Douglas watched nervously as the minutes counted down.

With a little over 60 seconds to go, Broughton were awarded a penalty. The large crowd hushed as Campbell set the ball, walked away from goal, turned, took a short run-up and calmly stroked the ball into the back of the net. With seconds remaining, midfield dynamo Rhonagh Douglas slammed a cracking shot at goal which was parried by the keeper. Captain Fantastic then drove home into the bottom left to seal a memorable victory.

The hooter went and the coaches broke down in front of the cameras, thanking their Mums and Dads and Baden Powell for this great moment.

The 11th, who usually make up the numbers in district competitions, have now won the first 3 tournaments of the Leith District calendar: Badminton, Table Tennis and Football. A rich seam of sporting form has clearly been struck. *Scott Richards*

Profile: Henry Newton Dickson (1866–1922)

Jim Adams continues his series on our area's connections with the history of marine science. The reappearance of herring off western Sweden after 70 years' absence, and striking fluctuations in their occurrence over previous centuries, prompted Otto Pettersson, in 1890, to seek a 'snapshot' of the marine environment beyond the coastal archipelago where they were fished. He invited other nations to join in 5 surveys (each aiming at a network of almost simultaneous observations) of the North Sea and Baltic.

Scotland accepted readily, interest and expertise in such matters fostered by the *Challenger* expedition (Issue 176) and by Fishery Board scientists aware of potential benefits from surveying beyond home waters. Henry Newton Dickson was appointed to oversee HMS *Jackal*. By this time Dickson was in Oxford, working as an independent researcher, teacher and writer, but he had been born and brought up at 38 York Place in Edinburgh. While a University student here he had worked as a volunteer at the Ben Nevis meteorological observatory and on pressure corrections for *Challenger's* thermometers.

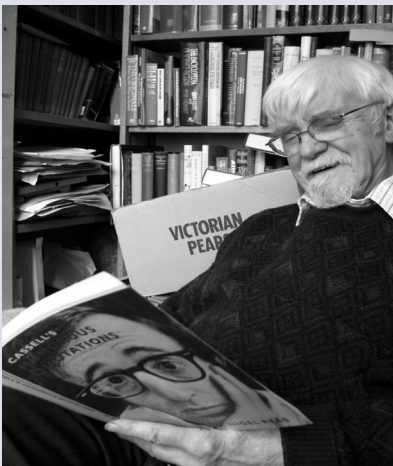
The 1893–94 surveys' success led Pettersson, Dickson and others to promote further international

cooperation in 1895. Eventually the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) was founded in 1902. Some positions first sampled by Dickson between Shetland and the Faroes in 1893 have been revisited frequently since, often during ICES-coordinated surveys, providing one of the longest time series of ocean climate data in the world.

Dickson went on to make notable contributions to oceanography, meteorology, and geography. He died in 1922 at his brother's home at 8 Gloucester Place, Edinburgh, aged only 55.



William Smith (1929–2010)



William 'Bill' Smith, the redoubtable and much-loved Canonmills bookseller, died on 3 February. When *Spurtle* interviewed him in April 2009 (Issue 173) he already knew himself to be in declining health, but faced the future with customary wit and intellectual rigour. The funeral service at Warriston Crematorium concluded, as Smith had stipulated it should, to the strains of 'Sweet Georgia Brown'. His son Fergus will continue the business at Second Edition, once described in the exacting *Drif's Guide* as 'by far the most interesting bookshop in Edinburgh'.

LGBT arts festival 'bigger and better'

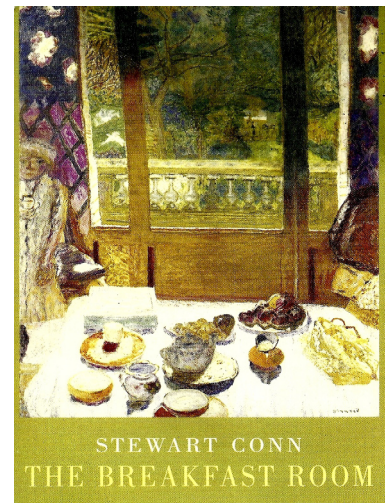
The second annual LGBT arts festival started on 21 February at the LGBT Centre at 9 Howe Street.

With funding this year from the Lottery Post Code, the event will feature 'bigger, better and brand new activities' including painting, sculpture, drama, writing, music and lampshade-making (for a full programme visit www.lgbthealth.org.uk). Participants can also work with National Galleries of Scotland staff to access and respond to works by the influential US photographer Diane Arbus (1923–71). Arbus's images depicted marginalised physical and social groups, and 69 of her photos will be exhibited later this year in the Artist Rooms at the Dean Gallery.

LGBT's arts festival will culminate on 12 March in an exhibition and performance evening which will feature the work of those who have taken part.

The LGBT Centre is a Scottish charity which promotes lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people's health and wellbeing. To find out more, contact Lauren Fox at lauren@lgbthealth.org.uk, Tel. 523 1100.

'Bottling a rare spirit ...'



Spurtle proudly published three poems by Stewart Conn this winter.

His latest volume of poetry, *The Breakfast Room* (whose cover features a sumptuous painting by Bonnard), was published on 25 February by the Northumberland-based, internationally renowned Bloodaxe Books (ISBN 978-1-85224-856-7). We would welcome readers' reviews.

Briefly

Trouble in Paradise? Another anonymous Calton resident has made contact, this time querying our use of the phrase '**frosty eminence**' in Issue 179. S/he politely suggests we distinguish between 'the **warm, welcoming and slightly anarchic** community of the *street* by the name of Calton Hill, and the **more modern and well-mannered** streets around the rest of the hill'. For Broughtonians marooned at altitude, see also 'Letters' online.

Locals worried by the deteriorating condition of empty properties at **Baxter's Place** must write to CEC before officials will intervene.

At last, the **hazardous pavements** of Bellevue Cres. – with their **innumerable crevices, ridges and mini-canyons** – have been repaired. Residents feel there remains an aspect of **crazy paving**, with irritating depressions here and major edging there. The general verdict is that it's a **patchy improvement**, but this niche of the World Heritage site deserves better.

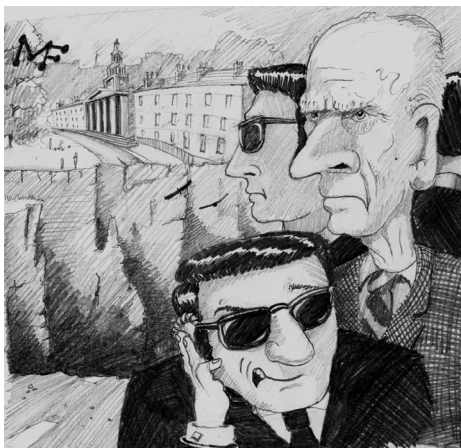
Riddle: When is a budget cut not a budget cut? **Answer:** When it's a CEC 1% schools budget cut – Cllr Marilyn MacLaren's preferred term is '**savings reduction**'.

New Town & Broughton Community Council has objected to weddings on **Calton Hill**. It claims CEC's £100 fees don't cover administration or supervision, and **erection of marquees** etc. could '**disturb people walking**'. (*Spurtle* staff do not recall the last time they tripped over a marquee.) NTBCC favours confining private events to the Observatory space.

Among other measures ('Breaking news' online), CEC plans **scaling parking permit fees according to vehicle emission levels**. Could this spell the end for incongruous city 4x4s and allow more room for alternative, sleek, utilitarian style-icons such as wheelie-bins?

From 22 Feb., locals have 28 days to object to CEC Traffic Regulation Orders concerning changes proposed by **Trams in Edinburgh**. Some Calton Hillers are rallying at 'Breaking news' (19.2.2010) online.

Bellevue Crescent VIP



(Very Irregular Pavement)

Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP
Member of the Scottish Parliament
for Lothians



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Friday advice sessions:
4.00pm Stockbridge Library,
42 Hamilton Place
5.00pm Ainslie Park Leisure Centre
6.00pm Constituency Office

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New Town/Broughton Community Council

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

Next 2 meetings on:
1 March at 7:15pm
5 April at 7.30pm

Drummond Community
High School

mowats@blueyonder.co.uk

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