

Spurtle



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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

NEW (FAMILIAR) FACE FOR BROUGHTON St MARY'S

The Rev. Peter Macdonald has been invited to preach as the sole nominee for the vacant ministry at Broughton St Mary's.

Macdonald was ordained in 1986, and has ministered in Pilton, Muirhouse, Kirkcaldy, and Edinburgh city centre among other places. He was Leader of the Iona Community before serving as locum at Broughton St Mary's for the past 10 months.

The Nominating Committee was unanimous in its choice, finding Macdonald's views a good match for their own 'as we affirm people no matter creed, colour, gender, sexual orientation and age. ... He has the experience and imagination to nurture personal faith, to enable Broughton St Mary's to develop its ministry in the local community and to explore fresh opportunities for outreach to the parish.' For more, see the recently much improved website at [www.bstmchurch.org.uk].



ADD YOUR THOUGHTS ON CAPITAL'S FUTURE

Ideas about 'Edinburgh: Connecting our city, transforming our places' went out for public consultation last month, with the deadline for feedback 8 weeks later in November. You can add your pennyworth here: [bit.ly/20H5XA7].

A draft plan will go to the Transport & Environment Committee in December, with a further (brief) round of consultations scheduled before a final proposal is voted on in May 2019.

As summarised in Issue 277, the project aims to frame a holistic approach to traffic management, public transport, and business-friendly environments that radically improve pedestrians' and cyclists' experiences of accessing, crossing, meandering around and relaxing in Edinburgh. Residents will be placed 'front and centre'.

The project arises out of cross-party, cross-departmental discussion, and looks at not just the city centre but 8 additional 'town centres' within the capital. The City Mobility Plan and Low Emission Zones are also being considered.

New Town & Broughton Community Council (NTBCC) last month reacted favourably to a presentation on the project by its lead officer Daisy Narayanan (Issue 272). In discussion afterwards, there was enthusiasm for the project's ambitious and far-sighted approach.

But there was also realism on all sides about the need to clarify who would manage any agreed plan, and how tangible improvements would be delivered according to an achievable timescale. There was scepticism from some about whether politicians would, over time, continue to apply the necessary courage, determination and resources when challenged by controversy or budgetary pressures.

Transport & Environment Convener Lesley Macinnes has nailed her colours to the mast. In a rapidly expanding Edinburgh (whose population is expected to reach 500k by 2040), she says the Council is serious about tackling poor air quality, reducing congestion, and making it as easy as possible to get around Edinburgh, especially by walking, cycling and public transport. 'The status quo is no longer an option.'



PLANNING DEPARTMENT CAN'T COPE?

Too late to report in our last issue, Edinburgh Academy's appeal to the Scottish Government has been successful (Ref. PPA-230-2231).

The Reporter found that its bid to expand within the Henderson Row campus accorded overall with the development plan, and that there were 'no material considerations' to justify refusing planning consent. Neighbours facing a looming new presence at the end of their back-greens beg to differ.

The grounds for the appeal were that City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) had failed to decide on the original application within the necessary timescale.

Similarly, Cornerstone Property Holdings has appealed its change-of-use application (Ref. 18/02357/FUL) to turn 2-3A Blenheim Place from a bank into a hostel. Once again, CEC failed to reach a timely determination.

Neither case dispels the impression of an under-resourced department in meltdown. Increased funding here, not least for its Enforcement wing, should be made a political priority.

MIXED VIEWS ON KINGSFORD RESIDENCE



When Kingsford Estates staff met concerned members of the Broughton Primary School community back in January, they went out of their way to offer reassurance.

They said Kingsford aimed to foster (and carefully manage) stable, trustworthy, long-term tenants at 154 McDonald Road; a semi-permanent group of up to 350 people who would not pose a threat to the infants below their windows (Issue 270).

That may still be Kingsford's long-term ambition, but today's reality is that some of (if not all) the 74 flats here are being let out on a short-term basis from £124 per night (in late September). Such arrangements do not offer the stability which parents and carers were told to expect.

Comments on TripAdvisor are mostly favourable [bit.ly/2NuUxmE], with some visitors loving their rooms and the friendly, helpful staff.

Others bemoan variously the unattractive playground, potential noise during term time, lack of parking (locals hog it), narrow stairs to mezzanine sleeping platforms, ineffective heating, no TV, cramped kitchenette with wonky appliances, low-ceilinged toilet in the shower, and a boring neighbourhood too far from the heart of the metropolis.

Briefly

Road resurfacing at the **Rodney St/Broughton Rd** junction will start on 1 Oct and take 6 nights (7pm–4am) to finish. **Noise restrictions** will apply after 11pm.



The project has overrun owing to **unforeseen utilities and services** being found under the road. There were also problems with the **depth of the bridge decking**, something which, again, was not evident from the plans. Furthermore, an additional **350m² of paving** was added to the original scope of works, to replace the **topsy-turvy health-and-safety hazards** which should have been obvious to everyone. The new paving slabs will doubtless go the way of the old ones as soon as **vans and oversized lorries** park on them to service nearby businesses.

Broughton History Society will meet at 7pm on 8 Oct in **Drummond CHS**. Sandra Purves and Richard Love will talk on 'Broughton through the Ages'.

The **Cockburn Association's** articulate case against developing **W Princes St Gdns** as an events venue may be read here: [bit.ly/2xEgiAP].

The Council (CEC) has rejected retrospective (and ludicrously naff) plans to run **7–8 Baxter's Pl** as short-term lets [bit.ly/2xmqK5p]. But locals hear this is not the end of the story, and are quietly girding their own and other's loins in preparation.

Police enforcement of **20mph speed limits** in the city centre has increased, with 9 prosecutions and 23 tickets issued (carrying a fine and 3 points on the licence) between May and mid-Sept. Community officers now have 2 machines rather than 1. **Deterrent cardboard-cut-out policemen** are available on loan to responsible adults who will take them indoors at night and cherish them.

Planning applications to adjust the operating dates of concessions over **Waverley Mall**, and to flood the Botanics with **coffee at Christmas**, have been granted. Oh, joy.

Congratulations to **Broughton St's** Curiouser & Curiouser, which last month celebrated 8 years in business.

The deadline to comment on Drum Property's planning proposals for **106–60 Leith Walk** was extended last month to 28 Sept. The change was required after **Leith Central Community Council's** Planning Convener noticed that the address originally given on the application (106–54) covered only the light-industrial rear of the site, not the **Stead's Pl** frontages. Meanwhile, the 12k-signature Save Leith Walk petition was accepted by CEC at the second time of asking on 20 Sept.

Former Church of Scotland manses on **E Claremont St** and **Ravelston Ter** have been sold, with the proceeds going towards a new manse for **Broughton St Mary's Parish** in Blackhall. Some £400k from the sales remains, which will go towards upgrading the **Bellevue Cres** church building.

Putting a number to student arrivals

Locals don't dislike students, but have complained for years that too many of them living in a neighbourhood can distort the housing market and unbalance communities.

In 2010, CEC tried to cap such localised concentrations at 30%, but developers kept straddling metric boundaries or redefining datazones. CEC introduced new guidelines in 2016, which 'consider cumulative impact' of students in developments over 0.25 ha but don't appear to impose clear limits. The sense at ground level is that no-one within CEC has really been keeping track.

In a bid to add statistical meat to the principled bones of the Save Leith Walk campaign, former Ward 12 councillor Nick Gardner has been totting up student numbers in this area based on successful planning applications since 2006. His figures are startling.

McDonald Rd, 139; Shrub Pl., 260+33; Murano Pl., 276+9; Logie Green Rd, 337+9; Elm Row, 155; Hillside Cres, 138; Haddington Pl., 226; Bothwell St, 240; Leith Walk, 17.

Add to these the potential development at Stead's Pl. (523) and the grand total is: 2,362. Draw your own conclusions.



Thinking about drinking

How many drinkers is too many?

CEC's Licensing Board has started considering whether to declare areas of overprovision in the city, where no new alcohol licences should be granted. One such area comprises 16 streets in the Old Town, where licensed premises have capacity for 19,376 customers.

Not currently being considered is the area covered by the New Town & Broughton Community Council, although some people think parts of it should be.

NTBCC's Licensing Convener, Jonathan Finn, has analysed CEC data and calculates that in the area bounded by Leopold Pl. in the west and Leith Walk in the east, Princes St in the south and St Vincent St in the north, the 48 streets have a total capacity for 50,978 customers. For Finn's full figures, see [bit.ly/2QOOFcr].

Now, for the sake of argument, let's suppose that those 50,978 customers were each to drink 3 pints every Saturday, starting on 5 January 2019. Given that alcohol makes one pee more than one has imbibed, *Spurtle* calculates that the volume of liquid leaving those drinkers would, if accurately aimed, substantially overbrim the Commonwealth Pool by 10 August.

All of which goes some way to explaining why the New Town's back-streets and dark corners are best avoided on a Sunday morning. You don't get this kind of in-depth coverage in the *Evening News*. Now see 'An inconvenient truth' (p.3).



'Granny' Thomson flits Bellevue

By the time you read this, Christina 'Granny' Thomson – the guerrilla gardener of Bellevue Place – will have left Broughton for flowerbeds new.

For 14 years, she has tended the floral 'enchanted island' outside her home opposite Drummond CHS, occasionally decorating it with amusing seasonal decorations, partly for fun, partly in aid of good causes. All this for free, and despite frustrating winds and light-fingered numpies.

Christina – pictured here during the Queen's Commonwealth Baton Relay in 2014 – settled at No 9 in 1977, and lived happily there with 3 generations of her family for many years. But, since losing her husband recently, the place has felt too big for her and she's now ready for a fresh start in East Lothian.

'I am going to live in a converted farm building with a lovely big garden, where I hope in time to care for "rescued" battery hens!' she told us.

'My two wee cats will be in heaven with the garden, which is quite enclosed.' *Spurtle* wonders how heavenly the experience will be for the chickens.

In theory, the Bellevue oasis she leaves behind will revert to CEC, which owns it. However, keen gardeners nearby have already mobilised to continue Christina's project. If any reader would like to join them, send us your contact details and we'll pass them on.

For now, *Spurtle* joins many other locals in thanking this community stalwart for all her wonderful efforts over the years. We wish her every happiness in her new abode.



The Colonel and the blue poppy

Of the myriad local admirers and keepers of Drummond Place Garden since its origin in 1823 – including the novelist Compton Mackenzie, the poet Sidney Goodsir-Smith, and, more recently, the physicist and Nobel laureate Peter Higgs – several made valuable contributions to both the garden and the nation. One such was Colonel Frederick Marshman Bailey (1882–1967).

Bailey lived at 7 Drummond Place in his early life, and having previously attended the Edinburgh Academy, served on the Garden Committee in 1909. He progressed to a highly colourful career as a high-ranking British Intelligence officer, and his clandestine work earned him many plaudits. His last appointment was as ‘His Majesty’s Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at Kathmandu’.

Apart from his sometimes hair-raising undercover work, his travels to then unknown parts of Tibet with the equally redoubtable Colonel Sir Francis Younghusband whetted Bailey’s appetite for photography and butterfly and plant collecting. During his second mission to Tibet, he discovered the blue poppy which grows wild there. He duly brought back seeds to Kew Gardens and our own Botanic, thus introducing the flower to this country where it is now named after him: *Meconopsis Baileyi*.

All gardeners owe him a huge debt of gratitude for bestowing upon us this most exquisite of the great family of poppies, which flourishes to this day in several areas of the Botanic. The Colonel was also instrumental in introducing the Lhasa Apso breed of dog to Britain.— *JRM* (Sources: Connie Byrom, *The Edinburgh New Town Gardens* [Birlinn, 2005]; Lettice Milne Ray, *The Story of Drummond Place* [s.p., 1952]; Wikipedia.)



Photo: Wikipedia, creative commons.

An inconvenient truth

Recent discussion about the number of licensed premises in central Edinburgh, and the desirability of transforming our streets for the benefit of pedestrians, have occasioned a new outpouring of unease at the capital’s lack of loos.

Similar considerations exercised Victorian denizens, although in those days there was at least some evidence of civilised progress being made.

This from the Caledonian Mercury (20 June 1861).— AM

For several years, Edinburgh has been conspicuous among the large towns of the kingdom for the scarcity of public places of convenience.

The want of these has very frequently been the cause of offences against public decency and the police regulations, chiefly by strangers visiting the city, who were unacquainted with its ‘lions’.

The desideratum was further aggravated by hiding the few conveniences that did exist away out of the reach of observation—a course which rendered them utterly useless to the public, while at the same time it occasioned that offence to delicacy which it was intended to prevent.

It is with satisfaction that we observe indications of a movement to remedy this evil—a spacious convenience for the use of females having been erected under the direction of the Cleansing Committee in Blackfriars’ Wynd, while the small cylindrical erection at the back of the Tron Church has recently given place to a large one of eight or ten compartments.

One has also been placed within the last few days at the side of Waverley Bridge, opposite the railway station, which, while so run into the wall of the bridge as not to be obtrusively conspicuous, will at the same time be of great advantage to the numbers who are constantly passing to and from the station, and who will become more numerous after the opening up of Lord Cockburn Street.



Photo: Napier Bathrooms, Canonmills.

Briefly

Spurtle hears foodbanks across the city face shortages as ‘**compassion fatigue**’ sets in among donors. As well as **food, loo rolls and sanitary products** are urgently required. Organisers must better coordinate and publicise their efforts.

CEC has recently replaced/upgraded playground areas in **Redbraes and Pilrig Parks**.

Repairs to a wall beside the Water of Leith walkway (WLW) between **Bonnington Bridge** and **Anderson Pl** will not start until Nov or early Dec. The route will stay closed until work ends. Pedestrian access to the raised WLW on **Warriston Rd** has been blocked pending refurbishment of **St Mark’s Bridge**. Between now and Feb, nature lovers will not be amused.

While most locals’ attention has been focused on substantial roadworks at **Broughton Rd, Picardy Pl and Leith St** lately, another major project has been progressing out of sight and out of mind. Twenty SP Energy Network staff are involved in installing a new 275kV transformer and replacing old infrastructure at the end of **Dryden Gait**. Next, they must connect it by under-road cable to the switching station inside the magnificently tatty Renaissance basilica at **95 McDonald Rd**. Work began in June and was expected to end in Dec. But access problems caused by contractors parking around the Shrub Pl development mean it will not now complete until Mar 2019.

Ambitious proposals for a world-class new concert venue on **St Andrew Sq** (Ref 18/04657/FUL) – the egregiously named **Impact Centre** – may now be viewed here: [bit.ly/2QNwL3g].



Rough sleeping around the city centre will probably decrease soon, once CEC’s **church-based night shelters** reopen in mid-Oct. They will stay open until the end of Mar. **Thanks go to Shelter, Bethany, Cyrenians, and the Police** for their humane work over the summer.

Officials say the cycleway on **Leith St** remains closed because there is insufficient access to it at the northern end. Eager cyclists may have to wait until the new crossing outside **John Lewis** and the cycleway’s extension to **Greenside Lane** are finished. However, temporary southbound access may be possible during reconstruction of **Picardy Pl**. Watch this space.

Jon-Paul and Amy Ranaldi – who launched their gluten-free, vegan and special-diet-friendly bakery on **Rodney St** in Aug 2015 – are opening a second branch in **Marchmont** on 27 Oct.

After new CEC rule changes, primary-school jannies unable or unwilling to work overtime mean many local groups have nowhere to meet. **Broughton Scouts** (11th Leith Scout Group) are among those shut out. It’s a daft city-wide cluster-muck, which must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Moreover ...

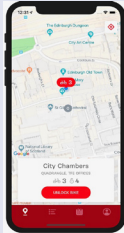
An application for change of use to flats, and associated alterations at 9, 9A, 9B and 10 W Scotland St Lane, has been approved (Ref 18/022697/FUL). The proposal attracted **23 objections and 12 messages of support**. The Development Management Subcommittee said that 'bringing a building at risk back into use justifies a minor departure from non-statutory guidance'.

Police in Edinburgh have a shrewd suspicion about **who pinched 9 bikes** in the city centre in Aug.

Newly extended **Bellevue Chapel** will hold an open day on 3 Nov, 2–5pm.

In a nutshell, CEC's **Parking Action Plan** proposes: increasing permit bands from 5 to 7, introducing RPI-linked price increases; a surcharge for new permit holders (and existing permit holders who switch to) using diesel; Sunday restrictions in central zones, and shared spaces and visitor permits; and double yellow lines at all junctions/crossing points. **New Town & Broughton Community Council** fears **displaced parking-cheapskates** may congest adjacent zones. Meanwhile CEC is in talks with the Scottish Govt about bringing in a nationwide ban on pavement parking.

Are you keen to travel green, and fussy about your diet? If so, then the **Just Eat Cycles** newly arrived outside Tesco on **Broughton Rd** may be for you. To hire one, you will first need to **download an app** for your phone; details here [bit.ly/2QTAvAi]. **Single trips** lasting an hour cost £1.50. A **£3 day pass** gets you up to 24 1-hour trips in a day. A **£90 pass** buys you unlimited 1-hour trips for a year. **Trips lasting longer than an hour** cost an extra £1 every 30 minutes. Other nearby stations to pick up and return hire bikes are situated at the **Brunswick St/Elm Row junction** and **Hamilton Pl** (by Dean Bank Lane), but there are many others across the city (including 'virtual' ones) which you can use the app to locate.



Duddingston House Properties and the Urbanist Group's controversial **appeal to the Scottish Govt** on plans to redevelop the old Royal High School as a luxury hotel began last month. The **creak and groan** of lawyers' bank accounts swelling has been audible across the city for months, but not so the hearings unless you **travelled to Tynecastle** in person. Why not? The much anticipated **live-streamed podcast** failed to operate smoothly, and, as we went to press, the equipment was being hastily reassessed. Another triumph for local planning democracy.

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LEITH CENTRAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

A forum for local people who want to engage with and work for their local community.



Participate in local democracy.

Make representations to City of Edinburgh Council, other public bodies and private agencies on everything that matters locally.

Next meetings: 7pm, 15 Oct and 19 Nov
Nelson Hall, McDonald Rd Library

leithcentralcc.co.uk/meeting-dates

Deidre Brock MP Edinburgh North and Leith



Regular Surgeries

Leith: 1st Friday of the month
1–2pm, 166 Great Junction Street
Leith Walk: 2nd Friday of the month
3.30–4.30pm, McDonald Rd Library
Stockbridge: 3rd Friday of the month
1–2pm Stockbridge Library
Royston/Wardieburn Community Centre: Last Friday, 4–5pm
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Member of the Scottish Parliament
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Constituency Surgeries

(no appointment necessary)

Every Monday:
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Every Friday:
4–5pm at
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NEW TOWN & BROUGHTON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

represents the views
of local residents to
City of Edinburgh Council.

You're very welcome to attend.

Come along and make a
difference at our next meetings

7.30pm, 8 Oct, 5 Nov

Broughton St Mary's Parish
Church, Bellevue Crescent

www.ntbcc.org.uk