

# Spurtle



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**BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER** Free

## LAST ORDERS FOR BROUGHTON BOOZERS?

Clark's Bar, a Dundas Street institution since 1899, closed its doors – apparently for the last time – on 7 June. Takings had slumped after the 2017 flit to Gogarburn of drouthy RBS staff, and there seemed few prospects of revival until clarification of a new use for the vacant site over the road. Journalist, commentator, and Broughton resident Joyce McMillan described the loss as a 'cultural calamity'. However, by 20 June, rumours were circulating in Broughton that Clark's would reopen with a lick of polish and under new management in July. We shall see.



Clark's closure came hard on the heels of other disconcerting news: an application for planning permission in principle to demolish Smithie's Bar on Eyre Place and replace it with a block of flats (Ref. 19/02460/PPP). Fond reminiscences and salt tears appeared here [[bit.ly/2IdpfLx](http://bit.ly/2IdpfLx)].

Meanwhile, The Phoenix on Broughton Street has yet to re-emerge from the ashes, and the Blind Beggar / Powderhall Arms / Dunedin Bar on Broughton Road opens and closes so often it's hard to keep track.

The solution, of course, is for more people to meet more often and regularly in bars. On the one hand, as a society glued to Netflix and cheap supermarket carry-outs, fewer and fewer of us seem to associate drinking with convivial public association. On the other hand, individual Edinburgh bars have floated upon and sunk under economic tides for hundreds of years (see p. 3).

## ROADWORKS TIMETABLE

The Council has released details of various forthcoming disruptions. To help you plan your summer of fun, we've highlighted those projects in and adjacent to Broughton, giving start-dates, durations, and work types.

- Broughton St, 22 Aug., 2 wks, carriageway resurfacing (CR)
- McDonald Rd, 1 July, 10 days, footway widening, road patching
- E. London St, 2 July, 7 wks, pedestrian crossing upgrade, CR
- Bonnington Rd, 8 Aug., 3 wks, CR
- Newhaven Rd, 26 Aug., 2 wks, CR
- Annandale St, 29 Aug., 7 wks, new pedestrian crossings, CR
- Broughton Rd, 8 Sept., 2 wks, CR.
- Pilrig St, 29 Sept., 4 wks, CR, new traffic island, footway works.

## POWDERHALL – A DISTANT RUMBLE OF THUNDER

The future of Powderhall remains uncertain. So far we've heard good intentions from the Council and a much vaunted willingness to listen, but little detail.

Last month, officials updated parents and locals at Broughton Primary School on progress. It emerged that the bowling greens and former transfer station sites are now to be treated together, not separately.

A proposal of application notice (PAN) will be submitted in July, with further public consultation following in August. In September/October, a full planning application may be submitted for the bowling greens, which could be approved in February/March 2020. Optimistic officials suggest building on the bowling greens could start in April 2020 and last a year.

But building of what? We won't know for sure until the full planning application. We do know that escalating construction costs mean CEC can't deliver the 3 nursery rooms and 198 places originally proposed; 2 rooms and 128 places are now envisaged. Year-round nursery education will be provided, but in what time-allotments has yet to be decided. There is

no clarity on when kids might start in the new nursery, or what, if any, 'intergenerational living' arrangements are still planned.

Broughton PS's Parent Council and Parent-Staff Association is wisely attempting to pin down Council terms like 'amenity' and 'green space'. But their true meanings won't be clear until the full planning application appears.

Various 'competing' CEC priorities have yet to be resolved: how to achieve best nursery-education results across the city as a whole; how to achieve optimum design outcomes; how to extract maximum value from the site by selling what proportion of housing to the private sector. With so much at stake and so little yet sorted, locals have good reason to feel uneasy.

## UNBLINKING FOCUS



We have a new addition to Spurtleshire's multiplying stare of owls. This example was observed in Broughton's 'Beaver Lands'. Rather alarmingly, its head moves through 180° in the wind. It is, we think, designed to deter vermin, cats, and children.

## SOLIDARITY IN DIFFICULT TIMES

In a recent letter to the congregation of Broughton St Mary's Parish Church, Hafiz Abdul Ghafoor (Senior Imam) and other leaders at Annandale Street Mosque expressed horror at the Easter Sunday terrorist attack against Christians in Sri Lanka.

Recalling how, following similar attacks, Jewish worshippers in Pittsburgh and Muslims in Christchurch were overwhelmed by gestures of support from other communities, the letter expressed solidarity with 'Christian Brothers and Sisters' here in Edinburgh and around the world.

'Let not those who try to divide us win in their mission. God is Good. God belongs to all humanity. As people of faith we believe in the Common Humanity of all Peoples, everywhere. ... Let us stand together in these times of trouble and strife.'

The full text of the letter appears in the June issue of BSM's *Broughton Beacon*.



## Briefly



Welcome to the Little White Pig, a new gastro bar at **26B Dublin St.** Its sample menu of breakfasts, lunch/dinners, things to nibble, light-&-quicks, and pub classics includes the intriguing 'pea mouse'.

**Catriona Scott and Sandra Bagnall** were named Health Champions in the **Edinburgh Evening News Local Hero 2019 Awards** in Jun. They were recognised for leading an outstanding team of pupils, parents, carers, and teachers in **Broughton Primary School's** Edinburgh Marathon programme.



The **McDonald Rd** footway build-out beside **Bridgeside House** has just had **2 new drop kerbs** installed, leading to a freshly marked cycle lane on the SE side. It is, remarks our observer, a **thinly veiled invitation** for cyclists to cross the build-out **without waiting** for oncoming traffic at the restricted opening. Good thing, too.

Since Dec 2015, *Spurtle* has criticised various commercial uses of **St Andrew Sq Gdns** [bit.ly/2WYXhIs; bit.ly/2xcbPtT]. We're not against fun. We're for quiet, free spaces and preservation of **city-centre trees and turf**. Proprietors have now banned the **Christmas/Hogmanay ice rink**, with Essential Edinburgh finally conceding the structure and consequent footfall were wrecking the local environment. **Unlike Underbelly, we are delighted.** See [bbc.in/2ZEYsia; bit.ly/2FsyTZQ; bit.ly/2FsyTZQ].

In Issue 284, we reported Scottish Gas Network's **apparently gung-ho approach** to running new pipes through old buildings on **London St.** Similar drill-first-ask-questions-afterwards reconnections are now causing anguish on **Forth St**, with some householders alleging SGN runs roughshod over **Planning regulations for listed buildings.** Elected members, Picardy Place Residents Association, the New Town & Broughton Community Council, and Edinburgh World Heritage are all taking a keen interest.

The Water of Leith Walkway between **Newhaven Rd** and **Anderson Pl** reopened in early Jun, thanks in large part to 18 months' determined lobbying from **Leith Central Community Council.** Guaranteed public right of access to any extension of the Walkway would be a prudent condition of future Planning consents in **Bonnington.**

## Locals kerb their enthusiasm

It may have been disruptive in the making. It may have taken longer than expected to complete. But locals were mostly content last month that Edinburgh Council had taken time to renovate and repaint tarmac along the length of Albany Street.

Content, that is, until they noticed significant sections of the new road surface had begun muffin-topping the adjacent pavement.

In these places, there is now nothing underfoot to tell blind or partially sighted pedestrians they are stepping from an area of speeding bicycles and electric scooters onto one of speeding white vans and yummy mummies in New Town tractors.

And at an intersection like the one pictured, on the northern side of the junction with Dublin Street, there is also nothing to stop rainwater diverting from its downhill passage to Drummond Place into the basement flats opposite The Magnum.

'It's a flood-friendly cock-up waiting to happen,' one exasperated resident told the *Spurtle*. 'We'll be soaked after each and every summer downpour.' CEC's Roads Department has been alerted.



## Refused plan's unusual backing

Planning permission has been refused for the erection of six 1-bedroom apartments behind **Claremont Crescent** (Ref. 19/00451/FUL; bit.ly/2O00GEe).

The Development Management Sub-Committee refused the proposal because it was contrary on 10 grounds to the Local Development Plan; e.g. the proposed scale, form, materials, design, and positioning would harm its surroundings [bit.ly/2WHTfgq].

Twelve neighbours objected. However, a remarkable 26 people from elsewhere in Edinburgh selflessly wrote in to support it. *Spurtle* investigated. Of these supporters, at least 16 work at, or are closely associated with, Coates Crescent-based Grant Property, including the applicant himself. Make of that what you will.

## Busy time for police news

Last month a man was arrested and charged in connection with the death, in December 2018, of 15-year-old **Mhari O'Neill** on **Calton Hill**. Background: [bit.ly/2KMHcDD].

Police are investigating an attempted murder on 16 June. A 16-year-old male sustained chest injuries after an attack by two men in a **Spey Terrace** property. Anyone with information should quote Incident no. 3004 (16.6.19).

On 4 June, a van driver who pulled left into a **Leith Walk** bicycle lane to park near **Pilrig Street**, knocking a cyclist to the ground in the process, was charged under Section 3 of the Road Traffic Act (careless driving). Despite (or perhaps thanks to) splitting his helmet, the cyclist later made a full recovery.

Meanwhile, a 13-year-old bystander, who tried to pinch the stricken bike thinking everyone else was looking the other way, seriously underestimated police powers of observation. They spotted what he was up to and charged him with theft.

## Room for improvement

In Issue 284 we reported the launch of a new campaigning organisation called **Citizen Network (CN)**.

Last month, CN posited 'Six Ways to Improve the Edinburgh Festival' [bit.ly/2WwYerw]. In brief:

1. Edinburgh Festival (EF) to: acknowledge its impact on residents; set metrics to measure success and a 'carrying capacity limit to visitor numbers'; focus on fewer and better shows.
2. Align EF with Scottish school holidays; create new venues in currently uninvolved Edinburgh communities; ring-fence any tourist tax for local benefits with public vote to decide which.
3. Limit duration of EF/festivals. Moratorium on new festivals and extensions.
4. Council to protect public parks and common land as non-commercial spaces.
5. Requirement for Big Four managers of Fringe venues to make public their annual accounts. No more huge contracts to single companies.
6. Development of environmental-sustainability metrics to assess impact on Edinburgh and the Earth of, for example, ever increasing short-haul flights.

Not everyone agrees with the reasoning behind these suggestions, or how well they could be implemented. (In particular, focusing on 'fewer but better' shows throws up various difficulties.) But they are not 'hard-left' rantings, as portrayed in some quarters. Instead, they raise fundamental and worthwhile questions which have not been widely aired before and certainly merit serious attention.



## Edinburgh on high: toil and trouble

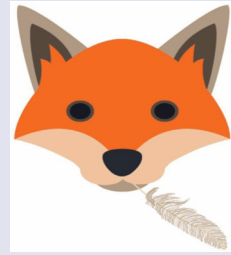
The Barony Bar at Nos 83–85 Broughton Street is a familiar and much admired building. The plaque on the façade by former licensees T. & J. Bernard gives an excellent potted history from its origins in 1830. Past occupants of the former five-storey corner tenement include a barber, a surgeon, a grocer, a gilder, a marble cutter, and a stationer.

The Barony supposedly stands on land ‘noted as a haunt for witches and followers of the black arts’. None of those consulted knew for sure, but one Barony worthy speculated that the pot and ladle beside the pub sign may refer to a witch’s cauldron. The current licensee, Rafael Karwacki, says that photos taken prior to the Bernards’ occupancy in the 1950s show no pot and ladle, suggesting their arrival was a later whimsical addition.

While there have been inevitable changes to the Barony’s internal décor, one of its enduring attractions is the fine ceramic tiling by the ‘Edinburgh artists’, with beautifully painted panels of Highland scenes. The pleasing tiled fireplace is also a joy. When lit with burning coals on a dreich winter’s night, it is just the place to sit with a generous glass of claret in one hand, and, in the other – sweeping back to the year of its publication in 1830 – a copy of Sir Walter Scott’s ‘Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft’. — *JRM*



## Briefly



Describing itself as a ‘modern Scottish restaurant’ using local ingredients, the New Town Fox has been flushed at **2 Dublin Street**, former home of Glass & Thompson.

Stand by for **Spry Wines**, which now has planning consent for a wine shop and café at **1 Haddington Pl.**

Artisan’s **Warriston Rd development** of 180 1–4-bedroom flats, (provisionally called **Canonmills Garden**) is now in Week 52 of construction. Visible progress is **set to accelerate** this summer as prefabricated load-bearing walls, stairs, and balconies are lowered into place by (mechanical) crane.

An application to install an **LED display screen** above the Playhouse Theatre’s main entrance on **Greenside Pl** [bit.ly/2Z7iRwa] was withdrawn without explanation.

‘**You have brains in your head.** You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself **any direction** you choose.’ Which Broughton notable quoted **Dr Seuss** last month at the end of a remarkably high-achieving year? See [bit.ly/2Y7b2GC].

**Leith community councils** last month made an impressive 20-page joint submission opposing Drum’s appeal against refusal of planning consent for student housing, a hotel, and retail at **106–165 Leith Walk** [bit.ly/2IOLU0L]. The Scottish Govt Reporter will make a site visit to help decide whether a **hearing or public inquiry** is now required to determine the case. No result is expected before the autumn.



Someone on **Rodney St** is a very keen reader. Pictured here are, perhaps, the **collected works** of Thomas Paine.

**Pickles of Broughton St** is going up in the world ... from downstairs at No. 56A to the giddy heights of the former **Café Nom de Plume** at No. 60. (We hear the owners there will focus instead on their equally friendly Regent Bar in Abbeyhill.) Meanwhile, **L’Escargot Bleu** at No. 56 is moving forwards at snail’s pace with plans of its own for the basement below.

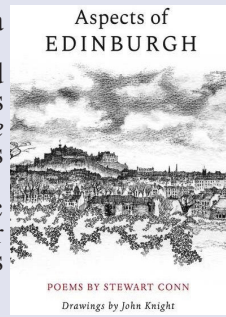
## Keen eyes and fine lines

Scotland Street Press last month published *Aspects of Edinburgh*, a collaboration by local residents Stewart Conn and John Knight.

Conn, as Edinburgh’s first makar and a widely published and anthologised poet, has a countryman’s feel for the capital as landscape and historic spoor. ‘His writing,’ says Nick Major in *The National*, ‘displays a wonderful sense of bathos that incorporates the grandeur of the scenery and ... the frivolousness of tourism.’

Knight, for 25 years a conservation architect with Historic Scotland, and a long-time and well-respected Planning Convener for the New Town & Broughton Community Council, interprets the city with curious and atmospheric accuracy.

An online review will follow in due course.



## Sale helps shape future housing

City of Edinburgh Council is selling offices and land at 200 Bonnington Rd to a private developer for £1.35M. Vacating the site will rationalise the Council estate, and is expected to save the authority about £107k per year.

The purchaser is Platform, which has already secured preferred bidder status on the former John Lewis depot and another site adjacent. Accumulating land hereabouts will allow master planning of a large residential project.

CEC will lease back the former Bonnington Resource Centre at £1 per year until 31 August 2020, to continue temporary office space for the Tram to Newhaven Project Team.

## Another local lost without trace

The following advertisement, occasioned by debts, appeared in the *Scotsman* on 22 July 1837.

### EXTENSIVE SALE OF A TAVERN-KEEPER’S EFFECTS, HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE, &c.,

*By warrant of the Sheriff,*

On Tuesday the 25th July 1837, at Eleven o’clock forenoon, at Gabriel’s Road, CONSISTING of Grates, Fenders and Fire Irons, Carpets and Rugs, Mahogany Dining and Breakfast Tables, and Hair-bottomed Chairs, Sideboard, Chest of Drawers, Mirrors, Bedsteads, Feather Beds and Bedding, and an extensive assortment of Kitchen articles, Grate, and Hotplate, &c.—ALSO, eight Mahogany Coffee-room Boxes, with Tables and Seats, Gas Metre and Fittings, with Brackets, Lustres, &c.; Lamps, Oil Cloths, &c.; Porter Engine, a large quantity of Pewter Pots, Crystal Measures, Cruet Stands, Knives and Forks, &c. &c., and a small quantity of Silver Plate. Ready Money.—No Duty. Sheriff-Clerk’s Office.

Gabriel’s Road was then a meandering track that had originally run from Inverleith to today’s Little King Street via the current steps at Glenogle Road, E. and W. Silvermills Lanes, Dundas House in St Andrew Square, and W. Register Street. Most of it gradually disappeared under 19th-century development. The Robin Hood Tavern and Coffee House was at No. 1, at the city-centre end of the route, and was replaced in the 1860s by New Register House.

According to an earlier *Scotsman* advertisement (11.6.31), it comprised an ‘excellent coffeeroom, three comfortable [sic] parlours, besides kitchen, bar-rooms and other conveniences’ on the second storey of a tenement. This was the setting for the multi-authored ‘Noctes Ambrosianae’ (Hogg, Lockhart, Magin, Wilson), published in *Blackwood’s Magazine* from 1832 to 1835 and named after the tavern’s then landlord Mr Ambrose. — *AM*

# Moreover ...

In the *Edinburgh Law Review* (22:3), Dundee Univ's Colin T. Reid reviews a book recently co-authored by **Mark Lazarowicz** (Broughton resident/former Edinburgh North & Leith MP) and Jean McFadden. Their 'concise but comprehensive guide' to *The Scottish Government: Law and Practice* is published by Edinburgh Univ Press. Reid concludes: 'At a time when Brexit has highlighted strains in the **intra-UK relationships** which have again shown that the devolution settlement is not fully settled after all, a reminder of the **devolution basics** is especially useful. This book is an excellent place to look for that.'

In the **Friends of Inverleith Park** spring/summer newsletter, Convener Pam Barnes reports that part of the Council depot area may be transferred to **community use**, as originally mooted in 2012. Perhaps, she wonders, one of the Park's **six or more toilets** could be reopened for public use.

Serving **Asian-fusion food** to eat in or carry out, **Oriente** has opened its doors at **160 Dundas Street**, on the corner with Henderson Row.

In Nov 2017 an **appeal was lodged** against refusal of planning permission for a luxury hotel at the **old Royal High School**. Scottish Government Reporters now expect to announce their decision in Aug.

**E. Scotland St Lane's** controversial garage-with-knobs-in was on the market last month for offers over £50k. The **ESPC website** reads, 'The garage has been adapted for storage use in recent times and may require **some minor modifications** should the purchaser wish to use it as a garage.' For those whose junk or car **could do with an education**, it helpfully goes on to list four schools in the area. When this '**beautifully refurbished**' property last went on the market in autumn 2013 (Issue 224), it was for offers in the region of £75k [bit.ly/2HRWXXJ].

After 4 years' nagging by local councillors, **Network Rail** has cleared undergrowth from an embankment near **Pilrig Heights**. Residents can now address problems with boundary walls.

Edinburgh Council has appointed a private partner to manage **official outdoor Fringe advertising** from 8 July to 9 Aug. Selected sites will be Council-owned and approved property, railings, pavements, lampposts, signposts, railings, and stand-alone structures. **They will respect** 'the local environment that residents live in all year round'. Sites will be checked daily for cleanliness, tidiness, and safety. The name of the partner is **Out of Hand Ltd**.

**Spartle Team:** E. Dickie, J. Dickie, M. Forde, J. Hart, M. Hart, D. Hill, A. McIntosh, J. R. Maclean, S. Michael, M. Orr, L. Rogers, C. Roussot, T. Smith, D. Sterratt, E. Taylor-Smith, D. Young.

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## Ben Macpherson MSP

Member of the Scottish Parliament  
for Edinburgh Northern  
and Leith Constituency



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