

Spurtle



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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

**October
2022**

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POLICE CRITICISED FOR FOLLOWING PROTESTOR

A social-media storm blew up last month after video footage emerged of a woman challenging police officers who had followed her on her way home [bit.ly/3SbJawK].

The woman had earlier protested against the monarchy by holding up a blank sheet of paper on the Royal Mile as the late Queen's cortege left Edinburgh on 13 Sept.

Two officers then followed the protestor as she walked home alone. When she confronted them on the corner of Broughton and Barony Sts, one officer said they were doing so in order to prevent possible disorder.



The woman denied that she had been, or was about to be, disorderly and refused to tell the officers her address. She described their actions as scary.

Without a full understanding of what happened on the day, before and during the Broughton confrontation, and of how the controversial video may have been edited afterwards, commenting on its contents is not straightforward.

However, in the context of Sarah Everard's murder by a serving officer in 2021, and debate about what constitutes lawful protest around the Queen's funeral [bit.ly/3RVp8a2], it is easy to understand why so many people reacted to the video, interpreting the police officers' behaviour here as polite political repression and/or smiling intimidation.

It was not lost on some that these events unfolded just as Edinburgh Council was concluding a consultation on what makes particular public areas and places feel safe or unsafe for women.

Ben Macpherson, MSP for Edinburgh Northern & Leith, commented on 18 Sept: 'The person followed in this concerning video is a constituent, and I felt I should let people know that they're getting assistance and have representation.'

'On their behalf, in my capacity as a constituency MSP, I've written to Police Scotland and Justice Ministers for answers and action.'

Spurtle has also contacted Police Scotland seeking a response. When we have it, we'll share it.

OVERNIGHT TOURIST TAX SLOWLY GETTING CLOSER

Outlining a Programme for Government last month, the First Minister announced plans to give councils the power to tax overnight visitors.

A bill could be passed in 2023 enabling local authorities 'to fund activities related to tourism and related infrastructure', said Ms Sturgeon.

Edinburgh Council estimates raising £15m per year this way, with tax payable on paid-for overnight accommodation (excluding campsites). The Council favours a £2 surcharge per room per night for up to seven consecutive nights.

Some 85% of locals welcomed the idea when consulted in 2018, but there have been words of caution, too. Hoteliers fear alienating potential visitors, not least when the tourism sector is still recovering from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Others suggest the money should be targeted at mitigating the worst effects of overtourism in Edinburgh (e.g., overflowing bins in the city centre, and displacement of full-time local residents), not at finding supposedly sustainable ways of growing it further or subsidising commercial interests.

And Edinburgh Council, which has lobbied hard for the change, is anxious to ensure that the levy will be in addition to the usual block grant from government, not instead of it.

Given that VAT raised on alcohol isn't restricted to increasing alcohol consumption, Spurtle wonders why revenue raised from tourism shouldn't be spent on Edinburgh's pressing needs elsewhere.



A LOT TO SWALLOW

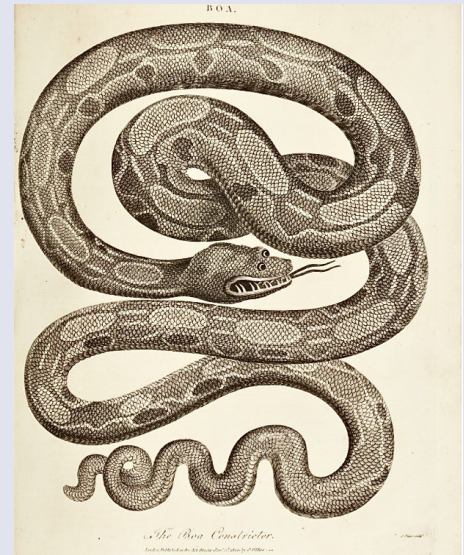


Image courtesy of Lyon & Turnbull [bit.ly/LyonandT].

This handsome boa constrictor appears in the massive *Encyclopædia Londinensis*, a work of scholarship digesting much of early 19th-century human knowledge and published in 24 volumes between 1810 and 1829. A complete edition – comprising contemporary half calf, several split joints and three detached spines – went up for auction at Lyon & Turnbull on 28 Sept. It was expected to fetch between £600 and £800: no small sum for anyone feeling the squeeze this autumn.

COUNCIL TWITTER – LOCALS TITTER

Account suspended

Twitter suspends accounts that violate the Twitter Rules. [Learn more](#)

Twitter suspended Edinburgh Council's customer service account on 14 Sept, a fate usually reserved for serious breaches involving obscenity, hate speech, or incitement of violence [bit.ly/3DxHrgW]. Had exhausted staff members gone rogue?

It emerged later that the Council's perceived sin was 'ban evasion', whereby someone sets up a new Twitter account to get round a previous exclusion from the platform.

'We obviously believe this to be an error and have appealed the suspension,' said officials. 'We're currently awaiting the results of this appeal but don't have any timescales on when it will be resolved.'

Citizens with personal experience of no timescales for fixing potholes, abandoned mattresses, blocked gullies, and other calamities felt nothing but sympathy. This was 'reassuring and disappointing at the same time', suggested one reader. 'A classic example of "Computer says no"', suggested another.

While @edinhelp remains out of action, readers can report problems to the Council's other account at @Edinburgh CC.

Briefly



The old **lade stream** and wheelpit serving the Canon Mill on **Canon St** have been exposed during recent preparations to build flats there. **Andy Arthur** on Twitter (@cocteauntries) plunged into the building's past [bit.ly/3PUHaHB].

Broughton History Society's next meetings will take place at 6pm in **McDonald Rd Library**: 3 Oct, James Simpson will talk on *John Hope and the Botanic Cottage*; 7 Oct, Bruce Keith on *Bridgescapes*.

In Issue 321 we reported contractors' 'tentative' enquiries about erecting **temporary 5-storey portacabins on Dundas St** beside the New Town Qtr site (former RBS buildings), and locals' forthright unhappiness at the prospect. Ediston's **Ross McNulty** has contacted *Spurtle* since to say, 'The proposal, was just floated for comment. *It has gone no further*. I have explained that to local groups. No intention here for a confrontation with the local community.'

The old Alpine Bikes outlet at **48 Hamilton Pl** has been acquired by the Edinburgh Bicycle Coop. It will specialise in selling and maintaining e-bikes.

Plans are afoot to convert the Colours Gallery at **41 Dundas St** into a café/delicatessen. If it gets the go-ahead, **Annabelle's Coffee Club** will have 20 covers, including 4 outdoor tables.

The Planet Bar's application for licensing variations (including outdoor seating) on **Baxter's Pl** (bit.ly/3CDlooS) was withdrawn before coming to the Licensing Board late in Aug.

Since 30 Aug there have been 5 applications in Spurtleshire to **convert dwellings into short-term lets** at: Albany St, Cumberland St, Cumberland St SE Lane, Dundas St. and India St. One application was ssed on Rose St and Windsor St Lane.

Welcome, Sketch Beauty at **44 Broughton St!** Running it is Chloe Stevens, a qualified makeup artist 'offering services for any occasion, including daily and bridal'. Meanwhile, nothing can conceal the **horrible mess at No. 50**. Shamoon's now serves as a builder's store/workshop.

Don't wait for your historic building to collapse before fixing it. **Edinburgh World Heritage's Maintenance Grants** fund proactive work to keep structures wind and watertight. **They can help you avoid expensive repairs later**. Find out more at [bit.ly/3RS97S1].

Taste of Italy aim to replace the old cold-rooms behind **9 Baxter's Pl** with a new extension for storage and a kitchen garden outside.

Festivals' future success requires forward thinking

Addressing widespread unease about the future success of Edinburgh's August festivals, Professor Cliff Hague laid out his thoughts on creating a resilient Festival City last month [bit.ly/3BpPf1H].

Hague is a town-planning practitioner, Emeritus Professor of Planning and Spatial Development at Heriot Watt University, and Chair of the Cockburn Association. His key recommendations include:

- increased commercial use of student accommodation out-of-term
- staging the Film and Book Festivals and a new stand-alone Comedy Festival at different times of the year, spreading the load
- holding the Summer Sessions in purpose-built concert venues, not in W Princes St Gardens at a time when they are needed most
- managing fewer simultaneous events in public spaces better.

In the face of soaring energy prices, unaffordable rents, and a cost-of-living crisis, Hague concludes that returning to 2019 levels of chaos and congestion is not a viable option.



Festivals: a priceless jewel and civic disaster

Depending on whom you speak to, Edinburgh's summer festivals are either a priceless jewel or a civic disaster. Both are true.

Diversity of representation has never been greater, but barriers to access, particularly financial ones, have never been higher. Festival contribution to the local economy is more critical than ever, but is also a catalyst for soaring rents and lost housing stock thanks to the short-term let industry. Millions of tickets are sold, a large proportion to local residents, whilst thousands only experience commuting misery and the rattle of wheelie-cases against cobbles at 2 a.m.

There is no question that Edinburgh loves its festivals; the polling is unequivocal. Those calling for its savage diminution do so in the face of majority opinion. Nonetheless it is clear, not least from the complaints of performers themselves, that changes are needed.

Chief amongst these: the need to address the mounting cost of accommodation to central residents and visitors alike. It's amongst the few areas of agreement between the partners of EdFest.com (the 8 largest Fringe venues) and stakeholder groups like PLACE, and the Cockburn Association. It remains to be seen if the will exists to drive the legislative and societal evolution required to remedy this symptom of unfettered capitalism.

We live in the shadow of the alternative: a city centre run for the benefit of the few, occupied by transient visitors (be they tourists or students), and too expensive for all but the most successful or privileged performers.—*Will Quinn [writer, reviewer, and Broughton resident]*.



New controls curb kerbside congestion

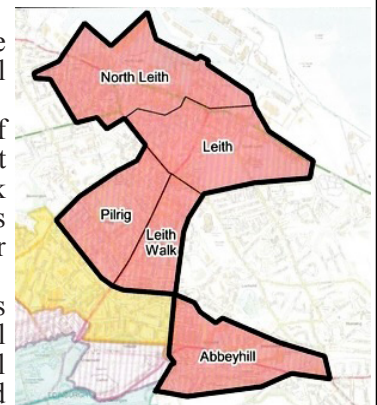
Motorists in Abbeyhill, Leith Walk, Pilrig, Leith, and North Leith will have to pay for on-street permits when roll-out of five new controlled parking zones starts later this year.

Councillors on the Transport & Environment Cmte approved the changes last month. The controls will run from 8.30am–5.30pm, Mon–Fri.

In 2019, Leith Walk already had the highest level of parking demand anywhere in Edinburgh. But fears that this and adjoining areas would become 'urban park and rides' when Trams to Newhaven begin operations in 2023 prompted locals to approach the Council for a CPZ extension.

It is anticipated that Phase 1 (which also includes parts of Shandon and Gorgie) will deliver an annual surplus of at least £2m per year. Any additional income, after all costs are accounted for, will be used to fund transport improvements across the city.

Many residents resent the prospect of paying for something they're used to having for free, especially when times are hard. Visiting tradespeople say it will add costs to every job. Locals living in uncontrolled areas adjacent to the new CPZs anticipate being next in line for a choking influx of out-of-town parkers.



A newspaper mourns

Four days after the death of Queen Victoria on 22 January 1901, the following items of 'General News' preoccupied the Edinburgh Evening News.

MANUFACTURERS OF CRAPE—are running their factories night and day. Hats made entirely of black glaze silk are suitable for ladies' mourning. Spring fashions for ladies this year will be confined to black material, which will gradually yield place to mauve and grey and less sombre tints.

THE DEATH OF QUEEN VICTORIA — had a curious effect on the London street flower trade. Violets and lilies in combination were almost exclusively in demand.

BIOGRAPHIES OF QUEEN VICTORIA.—Booksellers and publishers are prepared for a brisk demand on the part of the public for books narrating the life and work of Queen Victoria. There are between 40 and 50 such volumes at present available.

"VICTORIA DAY" SUGGESTED.—Let the Anglo-Saxon race throughout the world honour the Queen's memory by an annual holiday to be held on May 24, says a correspondent of the London "Daily Chronicle," and let it be known as "Victoria Day."

JET BECOMING FASHIONABLE.—Ladies are showing a tendency to put away their gold jewellery, and there is a growing demand for watch chains of carbonised steel. Jet is once again becoming fashionable, and black studs.

THE BOOM IN BLACK.—The boom in black is felt at every centre. The wholesale warehouses in the City of London are working overtime to cope with the demand for black goods. Prices have risen since Tuesday and are expected to go still higher.



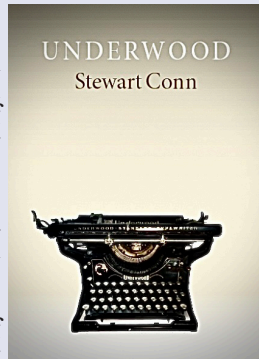
The here and now and unsettling hereafter

Underwood is the fourth slim pamphlet of Stewart Conn's poems published by Mariscat Press. Its title recalls the name of a typewriter used by his father. It speaks to the inheritances and bequests of a literary life.

Conn finds truth in the marvellous everyday. He's charmed by birds in the trees outwith his New Town windows – short lives with which he shares familial intimacy. His poems attest to seasons and the passing of time, to the value of art and music, and to the vulnerability which stems from love and being loved. But these deep dives are rooted always in the here and now.

Conn at 86 is aware of age, of impending separations and silences, of falling from view – realities he confronts with candour. His touch is light, his technique low-key. There is no posturing here, no tearing of hair, no superfluity.

And such quiet precision works. His touching grasp of 'mortality, in all its strength and fragility', arcs from poet to reader. He takes one's breath away.—AM [ISBN 978 1 8384509 3 9, £7.50]



Floodlight application postponed

Last month, Drummond Tennis Club withdrew its original application for floodlighting (Issue 320) but will submit a new one soon.

The change gave rise to some consternation and a few conspiracy theories among nearby objectors, but the explanation appears less complicated.

In considering the application, Edinburgh Council's Planning Department shared some neighbours' fears about light spillage into surrounding gardens. DTC always intended to address this by adding customised baffles or louvres to the heads of the luminaires at a later stage. But that would constitute a material change to the application which officials couldn't consider. Hence, rather than have a refusal, or a scheme of inferior standard approved, DTC withdrew the application.

A revised application is in the offing. Anyone who commented before should comment again if they want their opinions to be heard.

Old Royal High School - work starts soon

Work is expected to start on converting the old Royal High School into the new St Mary's Music School by the end of this year.

Structures approved for demolition will be taken down and removed, allowing engineers to inspect the foundations, have a thorough rummage, and plan how to proceed best.

Amendments to the original planning consent are progressing through the system, following detailed discussions with Historic Environment Scotland and officials about how to 'work with the building'.

Compromises are being found to balance accessibility and conservation, particularly in the main hall, with any changes requiring additional approval from Edinburgh Council's Development Management Sub-committee.

A sceptic involved with the previous proposals here for a luxury hotel has – perhaps mischievously, perhaps bitterly – argued on Twitter that the latest application is a ruse to preserve the previous consent while extra funds are sought to pay for the project. A source close to the St Mary's project describes the claim as 'obvious nonsense'.

The new school is expected to be finished in 2026.

Briefly



Who's going to the Greenwood? Outlaws and misfits or the people who want a more just society and a greener future? And who's already made the forest their home? Find out with **storytellers, mummies, and plenty of participation** as Story Valley Erasmus Project and Edinburgh College perform a free, family-friendly play in Hopetoun Cres Gdn on 19 Oct at 11 a.m.

Under delayed arrangements, 'various options' are being considered to improve pedestrian crossings at the west end of **Gt King St/St Vincent St** (in 2022/23), **Albany St/Dublin St/Abercromby PI** (2024/25), and the NW arm of the **Annandale St** roundabout (2024/25), **McDonald Rd/Broughton Rd** and **Broughton Primary School gate** (2025/26). A raised table at **Drummond PI/London St** is now scheduled for 2023/24, and an upgraded traffic refuge at **Drummond PI/Dublin St** in 2025/26. Signalised crossings at **Inverleith PI/Arboretum Row** and **Bellevue PI/Bellevue** are timetabled for 2026/27 and 2027/28 respectively. A mooted pedestrian crossing for **Eyre PI/Logan St** has been dropped.

The cluster of flats at **7–8 Baxter's PI**, which were at the centre of local resistance in 2018 to Cornerstone's short-term-let proposals (bit.ly/3KqM9yt) have been bought since by the developer **Ross Harper**, who is bringing them up to standard. We understand he proposes to sell them on to private buyers. Local residents report Harper to be a **good neighbour** so far.

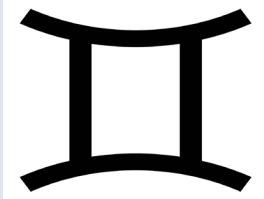
Creation of a new concert hall on **St Andrew Sq** will require demolition of old buildings and piling to support new ones. To predict (or, rather, forestall) the possibility of historic structures nearby **falling down with the shock**, a combination of liquid-levelling and wireless tilt sensors, plus automatic stations and inclinometers will be attached on a temporary basis.

Alterations to Deaf Action's frontage at **49–51 Albany St** (Issue 320) have been approved, but there will be no flagpole.

Electric vehicle chargers on **E London St, Heriot Row** and **Montgomery St** went live on 5 Sept. For Edinburgh drivers, it has never been easier to displace their pollution to other parts of the country. Meanwhile, carbon emissions **embodied in a car's manufacture** exceed those created in powering the finished article.

Signs in the window announce that First Class Turkish Barbers are to open at **34 Broughton St**. They are not to be confused with the First Class Turkish barbers already operating on **Morningside Rd**.

Moreover ...



Never mind the Pollux, Here's the HMO. A certificate of lawfulness is sought to continue running **168 Dundas St** as a 6-bedroom house in multiple occupation. The dwelling was, until c.2016, the **Gemini sauna** and erotic massage parlour.

The **Kirk Session of Broughton St Mary's** were as surprised as anyone to learn that Galliford Try Telecoms had been refused **planning permission** to install antennas and GPS and ERS modules to the **outside of their steeple** (Issue 321). 'No such proposal was received by us', they tell us [bit.ly/3RAZ43b].

Hutchison 3G UK's plans to replace rooftop telecoms equipment on the **Balmoral Hotel** have been refused (22/036066/LBC). Historic Environment Scotland and the Architectural History Society of Scotland said the two new antennas would be highly visible on the **clock tower** and a **chimney**, and would detract from the B-listed building.

Contractors do not expect to complete renovating **North Bridge** until 2025. 'It's a bit like when you do some DIY,' Transport & Environment convener **Cllr Scott Arthur** told STV. 'You take the wallpaper off the walls and find **lots of unexpected things**. I think that's what's happened here on a much bigger scale.' Which is why you should **never strip wallpaper at home**. Just keep pasting new layers onto old ones for **generation after generation** until your interior decoration is what keeps the property upright and insulated and increasingly compact.

From Brazil to Broughton via Washington, **Santu Coffee** have moved their roastery from the Biscuit Factory on **Anderson Pl** to the Category C-listed municipal wash house and Printmakers' Workshop at **23 Union St** [bit.ly/3U8dutM]. Santu's 10-year lease from the Council began in June 2021. In return for a 9-month rent-free period, they agreed to undertake **substantial repairs** to the roof and other work such as complete rewiring. More on the company at [bit.ly/3BomUJ2].

Beware of pale imitations. The newtownflaneur currently posting content on Instagram is **not the original** @newtownflaneur who posted on Twitter until **disappearing in 2020**. The ersatz observer's photos are not as good, the sarcasm **not as mordant** or well observed. The genuine article – who still prowls these streets – is **unamused**.

A French resident of Spurtleshire remarks that the recent 'storm' about blank placards at funeral processions was **quintessentially British**: Choose completely the wrong moment and say **nothing at all**. Then, at the appropriate time, **stay at home with one's knitting**. Perhaps the French, **no strangers to barricades and tricoteuses**, could teach us a thing or two.

Spurtle Team: E. Dickie, J. Dickie, J. Hart, M. Hart, D. Hill, A. McIntosh, S. Michael, M. Orr, C. Roussot, E. Roussot, T. Smith, D. Sterratt, E. Taylor-Smith, D. Young.
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RODNEY STREET BARBERS

Julie 07989 441557, 42 Rodney Street
Tues–Fri, 11am–5pm; Sat, 10am–2pm



LEITH CENTRAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

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



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Leith Central Community Council

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

Next meeting: **Mon. 17 October, Nelson Hall, McDonald Road Library.**

<https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>

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Drop-in Help & Advice Surgeries
first Friday of every month

9:30 to 10:30
Royston/Wardieburn Community Centre, 11 Pilton Drive North, EH5 1NF

11:00 to 12:00
West Pilton Neighbourhood Centre, 19 West Pilton Grove, EH4 4BY

15:30 to 16:30
Leith Community Centre, 12A Newkirkgate, EH6 6AD

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