

# Spurtle



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**BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER** Free

## GREEN FLAGS FOR LOCAL PARKS

Keep Scotland Beautiful last month presented 38 Edinburgh parks with its coveted Green Flag Award. More or less local recipients were Hopetoun Cres Gdn (15), Inverleith Pk (14), King George V & Scotland Yard Pk (9), London Rd Gdns (13), Starbank Pk (5), Victoria Pk (15). Bracketed figures show the number of previous consecutive years in which the award has been won.

KSB's Green Flags champion clean, well-managed and safe spaces, always with some community involvement.

Recognising the importance of parks for physical and mental wellbeing, the environmental charity's Jamie Ormiston said, 'Receiving this prestigious benchmark recognises all the hard work which has gone into maintaining and managing these precious green open spaces.'

'It is imperative that Scotland reconnects with the natural world if we are to fix the biodiversity crisis, and these green spaces will allow people of all ages to do that.'

St Mark's Park is greatly used and enjoyed. But lack of community commitment to its upkeep explains a 17th consecutive non-appearance among Green Flag winners. Perhaps eventual development of housing on the former Powderhall Waste Transfer Station site adjacent will change this.



## COUNCIL TURNS DOWN CROALL PLACE POP-UPS

Plans to construct 8 pop-up units and an accessible toilet near the Leith Walk Police Box on Croall Pl have been refused [[bit.ly/No325p2](http://bit.ly/No325p2)].

Officials ruled the proposal would have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the site and its surrounds, and would negatively affect users of the footway and cycle path (22/06445/FUL).

New Town & Broughton and Leith Central Community Councils had earlier welcomed this effort to animate an otherwise 'sterile' streetscape with community uses. However, they had misgivings about the eventual design of the pop-ups and their effect on users of the nearby bus stop.

A local trader was more critical. She cited: current and potential obstruction of the pavement, unlicensed amplified music, dangerous corrosion of the existing rail bridge, illegal parking during set-up and take-down, incongruous 'beach huts', vandalism and unfair commercial competition.



## SCOTTISH BEACON SHEDS NEW LIGHT ON LOCAL NEWS

A new collaborative project launches on 3 Aug aimed at showcasing and strengthening the work of independent, community-based news providers across Scotland. This paper is one of the founding members.

The project – called the *Scottish Beacon* – has a website featuring the work of journalists in a wide range of local settings. It's an opportunity to celebrate our diversity and to identify common issues where shared investigation in future could make a difference.

Behind the scenes, participants will pool knowledge, resources and advertising revenue to provide training, professional support, and improved sustainability for organisations which often operate in isolation and on shoe-string budgets.

Other participants include *Crail Matters*, *Greater Govanhill*, *Inverclyde Now*, *The Lochside Press*, *Orkney News* and *Shetland News*. Closer to home, there's input from *C&B News*, *Edinburgh Reporter*, and the *Ferret*.

Access to the *Scottish Beacon* website is free here: [<https://www.scottishbeacon.com>].



## PECULIAR PAIR GO UNDER THE HAMMER



Image: Lyon & Turnbull.

It is nearly 10 years since we reviewed two of Scottish artist Heather Nevay's queasily compelling works in a Christmas exhibition at the much missed Union Gallery on Broughton St [[bit.ly/HNevay](http://bit.ly/HNevay)]. Nevay's reputation has grown since, and three of her earlier works will now appear in Lyon & Turnbull's Contemporary and Postwar Art auction on 9 Aug. This acrylic on canvas – *Act II: Passage Through the Wildwood (2000)* – is estimated to fetch between £2,000 and £3,000.

For more details see [[bit.ly/LT9823](http://bit.ly/LT9823)].

## HELP IS AT HAND FOR HARD-PRESSED PARENTS



Leith Collective has launched a free school-uniform exchange at its Ocean Terminal shop this summer. The aim is to help parents have 'at least one less thing to worry about throughout the holidays'.

LC, a local Community Interest Company, welcomes donations of good-quality uniforms, schoolbags, pencil cases and other school essentials (everything except socks and tights) for collection by anyone who needs them ... free of charge and no questions asked.

Founder Sara Thomson says, 'Demand for our free school-uniform exchange last year was high. Sadly, due to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, there is an increasing number of families from all walks of life who are genuinely anxious about how they will kit out their kids again this year.' In state schools, term starts on 16 Aug.

Leith Collective is open Mon–Sat, 11am–6pm; Sun, 11am–5pm. It is running a similar initiative in its other Edinburgh outlet at Fort Kinnaird.

# Briefly



On 13 July, an 'operational failure' affected the **Broughton Rd Waste Water Pumping Station** (a single-storey pebble-dash structure at the foot of Broughton Primary's playground). As previously reported, the culverted **Broughton Burn** here helps push sewage east to Seafield [bit.ly/Brburn]. **Scottish Water** deployed 10 independent contractors' vehicles, pumps, generators and a crane on-site over the weekend of 14–16 July. SW strove to **minimise noise** during the work, but, realistically, did not pooh-poo the level of disruption for local residents. For reasons we don't understand, the incident resulted in pollution of **central and western beaches at Portobello**, where bathers were warned not to swim or paddle in the water. For other recent Scottish Water news, see [bit.ly/WoLpol].

At least **3 dogs fell ill and one died** after eating grass cuttings with white residue in **Inverleith Park** last month. Vets were running toxicology tests as we went to press.

A fresh complaint was raised last month about the colour of the front door at **9 Drummond PI** [bit.ly/No330p2]. The 'off-white' shade most recently applied, it seems, was too-off and not-enough white for some tastes. Interviewed by the BBC on 11 July, the glum-faced '**Pink door woman**' who owns the property said she was 'speechless' before going on at some length to describe how '**shocked**' and '**distraught**' she was [bit.ly/pink-ish]. However, she appears to have had the last laugh as, following a site inspection by Council staff, the new questionable pink was **found to be acceptable**. That case is now closed. However, we look forward to new **storms in a paint pot** at other New Town addresses over the months to come.

The owner of **14 Heriot Row** seeks planning permission to reinstate a **Georgian fanlight** and to repaint the front basement, cellar and garden-store **doors** in something close to their original colour: **Obsidian Green**, as produced by the Little Greene Paint Co. Simple.

We hear reports of destructive behaviour by dogs in **George V, Inverleith, Montgomery St and Pilrig Parks**. The galumphing canines (and their negligent humans) form only a small proportion of the total, but dog ownership has **increased since Lockdown began** and open public spaces are suffering as a result.

Scaled-down but still controversial plans to develop 19 new residential flats at **5–6 Marshall's Ct** (attracting over 80 objections from neighbours and the NTBCC) have been **withdrawn** (21/06219/FUL). An unconnected appeal to Scottish Ministers against the Council's enforcement of change of use for an STL at **11 Marshall's Ct** has been dismissed [bit.ly/MshlCt].

**Brunswick St** (between Elm Row and Montgomery St) will be closed to traffic from **noon till 8pm on 2 Sept** for a community event.

## Tracking down the Broughton screech

At the start of July, residents at the Leith Walk end of Annandale St asked us for help to identify an occasional unholy screech. They had found no obvious source for the noise, and no pattern to the time of day it occurred. However, it was loud enough to be heard indoors with windows shut.

*Spurtle* investigated at various times of day and on different days of the week. From our observations, we now have five possible explanations.

- The very young and expressive baby living in or visiting a Gayfield PI Lane property which backs onto Annandale St gardens.

- A high-pitched whine produced by trams travelling uphill from the McDonald Rd stop towards Picardy Place.

- Buses turning right out of Annandale St onto Leith Walk as their tyres sometimes squeak across the tram tracks.

- Angle grinders shaping paving slabs on Elm Row.

- The excessive 'roar' of the Omni Centre's air extraction system on Upper Greenside Lane.

Explanation No. 5 seems to us the most likely, and has already been the subject of a complaint by locals living in Blenheim Pl. The Omni management and Council officials have been contacted.

Curiously, the noise is reflected and distorted by Calton Hill and nearby structures, and is louder on the drying green at Marshall's Court than it is in the northern shadow of the theatre itself. We suspect similar effects, and changes in wind direction, may explain the intermittent 'shriek' heard on Annandale St.

If you have a better solution, please share it.



## Long-distance yomp for a good cause

East London St resident Jamie Forbes has signed up for a 60 km trek across Iceland next month to raise money for charity. Forbes has already reached his £4,000 target but now hopes to reach £5,000 and maybe more.

Money raised will go to Crisis, the UK charity combatting homelessness. 'It will support the organisation to develop and launch a brand-new not-for-profit lettings agency for those on low incomes, making renting easier and more affordable for people who would otherwise be homeless'. You can find his JustGiving page here: [bit.ly/JFJG].

Forbes is pictured here on the West Highland Way, a challenge he completed last year to raise over £12,000 for Mental Health UK.

A longer version of this article appears on the Breaking News page of our website.



## Local heroes – paws and enjoy

Observant locals may have noticed this charming oddity on the Delish Yoss Coffee Bar opposite Broughton Primary School. Owner Yoss Masson explains.

'In Oct 2021, when I was preparing the police box for winter, I had an idea to add a fun image under the counter. I wanted something directly in children's line of sight when they pass on their way to and from school. The idea was to create a scene of cute animals living in a nook under the counter.'

'The choice to commission Kirralee Fisher was the easiest thing. Kirralee had been a customer of mine for a long time, stopping every now and then for a hot chocolate and a chat. I was aware that she is an illustrator [bit.ly/KirrFisher] and had followed her on social media, so I had an idea of what I might expect should I commission her.'

'After explaining to her what I'd like to do, she started on some sketches and we bounced ideas off each other. Pretty quickly, we arrived at red squirrels, and Kirralee had the genius thought of making them superheroes. I loved that!'

'Shortly after commissioning the piece, I was unfortunately injured and had to convalesce for some considerable time. Following my return, the first thing I did after thanking Zoe, who minded the coffee bar in my absence [bit.ly/No314p1], was to hang Kirralee's piece in position.'

'The kids love that scene. It attracts lovely reactions from passers-by almost every day. Mostly, children notice it long before the grown-ups.'

'Some children ask whether the squirrels have names, to which I reply: "They all have a different name every day. Today it's your turn to choose."''



## Fast and furious oats

Tracy Griffen, personal trainer at Griffen Fitness on Balfour St, tells us she's chuffed to have been invited back to the Golden Spurtle Porridge Making Championships in Carrbridge on 7 October. This will be the competition's 30th anniversary.

Griffen describes last year's event as 'tough but friendly'. Although it was her first competitive outing, she still made it through to the final round. 'My choice of porridge was unique,' she tells us. 'A blend of fine oatmeal with pre-soaked pinhead.' Only water and salt are allowed as extra ingredients.

'Lisa Williams won last year, but this time I'm going to match her "low-and-slow" cooking technique with my own "fast and furious" alternative,' says Griffen. 'Clue: my porridge tastes like pudding.' All locals can get behind our local porridge warrior, who glories in joint Leith and Spurtleshire citizenship.



## Briefly



'ΠΑ ΒΩ ΚΑΙ ΧΑΡΙΣΤΙΩΝΙ ΤΑΝ ΓΑΝ ΚΙΝΗΣΩ ΠΑΣΑΝ,' said **Greater Spurtleshire** resident Archimedes over 2,200 years ago. 'Give me some secateurs and I'll clear the cycle path' is the more achievable project of a **contemporary equivalent**. A Broughton reader last month snapped this (distant) guerrilla sniper restoring space for walkers and cyclists on the overgrown path between **Broughton Rd and St Mark's Park**. We salute him. But what next? Guerrilla pot-hole filling? Guerrilla bin collections? Guerrilla parking enforcement? Guerrilla social care? At what stage do we stop and demand effective delivery of those **basic Council services** we used to take for granted?

Those behind the free-standing illuminated sign advertising the Edinburgh Food Market on **Greenside Pl** have appealed to the Scottish Govt following Edinburgh Council's **emphatic refusal of planning consent** (Issues 326, 328). Public comments are invited by 8 August and a decision may follow in early Oct. In a separate case, **Nuveen Real Estate** has appealed to the Scottish Govt to overturn the Council's rejection of an unsightly **Halo-lit W** near the top of the Golden Turd (Issue 328). A decision is expected in mid-Sept.

In mid-July, new or refurbished **waste and recycling bins** returned to Leith Walk locations at **Crichton Pl, Albert Pl, Elm Row, Haddington Pl** and **Gayfield Pl**. If there was general public rejoicing at the development, we didn't hear about it.

Following the introduction of restricted parking on 26 June, **Pilrig St** has been blessedly free of invasive vehicular species, writes a local resident. We suspect this is to the great relief of **No.11 bus drivers**, who can now pass one another freely in today's wide-open spaces. It's also much safer now for **drivers emerging from side streets**, as they can actually see what's coming in both directions. The only downside is the **easily yielded-to temptation** to disregard the 20 mph limit, but that will come as no surprise.

Construction of a paved seating area and adjacent kitchen/dining pergola in the garden behind **12 Dublin St** is causing a stink on social media (23/0338/FUL). Earlier this year, some 16 neighbours objected to **loss of green space**, potential noise and cooking smells, and outdoor lights and heaters. They feared the property (which already has 2 internal kitchens) would be used for **commercial purposes**. To their surprise, officials consented the proposal, saying it would preserve the character and appearance of the **conservation area**, was compatible with the existing dwelling and surrounding neighbourhood character, and would not result in an unreasonable loss of **neighbouring amenity**.

## Rail route steeped in history

This handsome 'Red Wheel' plaque (similar to the one on the Rodney St Tunnel entrance opposite) was installed last year, but only recently has it been officially unveiled.

Thomas Grainger's 1,000-yard tunnel had a peak gradient of 1 in 27, requiring the services of, first, horses, then a static steam engine to haul the Edinburgh, Leith and Granton Railway's trains up the hill to Canal St (now beneath Waverley Mall) by means of an 'endless rope'. Follow this link for interesting historical background and photographs [bit.ly/ScStTun].

Meanwhile, on Dryden St, another National Transport Trust Red Wheel has been mounted, this time to commemorate the Shrubhill Workshops and Power Station.

Opened in 1898 to service the city's cable-trams, they were converted in 1922 to 'build, power and maintain' electric trams, which useful functions they performed until 1956. Work on new housing behind the Engine Shed walls is now nearing completion. An official unveiling of the plaque there will take place on 7 Aug.



## Theory for change of climate

*From the Edinburgh Evening News, 2 Feb 1892.*

The fifth ordinary meeting of the Royal Society was held in Edinburgh last night:—Professor Flint in the chair.

A paper by Dr C. Piazzi Smyth, late Astronomer Royal for Scotland, on the latent Physical Geography from Greenland was read by Mr. John Murray. Dr Nansen's recent work on his journey across Greenland received special attention in the paper, particularly with reference to the various theories advanced to account for climatic changes.

It was also pointed out that another traveller, Mr Andrew A. Anderson, Surrey, had started a theory to the effect that besides its diurnal motion on its polar axis the earth has a motion on an axis on a plane of the equator which completes its period in about 20 millions of years, which, it was held, would sufficiently account for any change of climate, as it would produce a gradual change of latitude in every part of the earth's surface.

Lord M'Laren regretted that Dr Smyth had given no astronomical evidence in support of Mr Anderson's theory. During the past century, observations had been made with a great degree of accuracy, but he was not aware that a change of latitude to the extent of one second a year had taken place.—Dr Geikie made some objections to the theory from a geological standpoint; while Mr John Murray said Mr Anderson's book was a mad one, and of all the scientific books he had read it was the worst.

*Anderson (c.1845–c.1896) was born in Scotland but emigrated to South Africa in 1860. There, he travelled extensively, visiting Namibia, Botswana and western Zimbabwe. He fought in the Zulu War of 1879 and lived in England between 1884 and 1888. His collection of Palaeolithic blades, flakes and microliths is now in the possession of the British Museum. Anderson's Terra. On a Hitherto Unsuspected Second Axial Rotation of Our Earth was published in London in 1887. His (by today's standards shocking) Twenty-Five Years in a Waggon in South Africa, also published in 1887, is available online at [bit.ly/AAAnderson].—AM*



Image: [bit.ly/WikMed].

# Moreover ...



National Galleries of Scotland announced on 18 July that 10 new exhibition spaces, accessed from **E Princes St Gdns** and housing over 130 Scottish artworks, will open to the public on 30 Sept. The **£38.62m** project was funded by a £15.25m contribution from the Scottish Govt, £6.89m from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and £16m from various private and institutional donors.

Common Blue Ltd seeks to vary its licence for **36 Broughton St (Fhior)** to: allow amplified music (at volumes which won't disturb neighbours); add **training, tasting and conferencing** to its permitted activities; and permit children into the lower-ground floor.

Some 17 volunteers braved squally conditions last month during a **Friends of Calton Hill** litter-picking battle with the elements. One of them laments this summer's poor show of **harebells** there. Only 25 flower heads survived Council mowing in early July, compared to around 600 in 2020. Elsewhere, **Friends of Pilrig Park** have reconstituted after a **pandemic-related hiatus**. To find out more, visit [bit.ly/FoPP].

The **Este Medical Group** (a 'medical cosmetic facility') wants to erect two 2m flagpoles outside the first floor of its premises at **37 York Pl**. Este – priding itself on high standards – specialises in laser hair regrowth/removal, hair transplants, fat freezing and electro-magnetic body sculpting. A great day out for all the family.

The **Museum of Scottish Fire Heritage on Dryden Ter**, favourably reviewed in Issue 330, is now officially open. Hours: Tues–Sat, 10am–4pm. Info: [bit.ly/MuSFH].

If you're confused by never-starting, never-ending roadworks between Waverley Station and New St on **Calton Rd**, the reason is: they're not roadworks. The barriers (and associated traffic lights) border a **safety zone** into which rocks from the unstable surface of **Calton Hill** may fall harmlessly.

Separate applications to operate short-term lets at **1 and 4 Barony Pl** and **2 Gayfield Pl** have been refused. Grounds for refusal were loss of residential accommodation and detrimental effect on neighbours' living conditions and amenity.

**Eleventh Hour Films** shot scenes for a new 6-part series of **Rebus** last month. Locations included **Circus Lane** and Cullerton's (the estate agents on **St Stephen St**). The Circus Lane Residents Assoc received a donation in recognition of 23 hours' disruption and services to culture. Cue **local improvements**, uproarious laughter and champagne corks popping.

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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.



Leith Central Community Council

Participate in local democracy.

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

Next meeting: 7pm, Mon. 21 August, Nelson Hall, McDonald Road Library.

<https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>



**Deidre Brock MP**  
 Edinburgh North and Leith

I'm here to represent you.

Email or call to arrange an appointment at one of my surgeries:

**West Pilton Neighbourhood Centre**  
 Second Friday of the month 2–3pm

**Stockbridge Library**  
 Last Friday of the month 1–2pm

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"I am here to help and serve all constituents in Edinburgh Northern & Leith. If you need assistance, or if you would like to discuss any issues or ideas, please contact me or come and see me at one of my monthly Drop-in Help & Advice Surgeries."

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 first Friday of every month

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**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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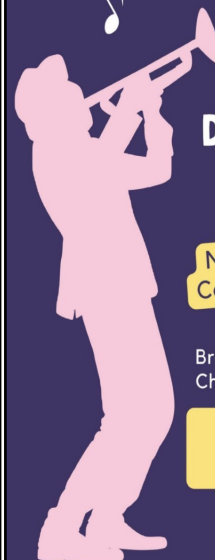
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**DEBUT FRINGE CONCERT**

No Strings Attached Community Wind Band

24th August 2023, 8PM  
 Broughton St Mary's Parish Church, Bellevue Crescent

Tickets £5  
 Under 18s free

