

Spurtle



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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

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DULL DESIGN ADDS NOTHING WITH TOO MUCH

Edinburgh-based Colliers seeks planning consent for a 4-storey block in the car park behind Canon Court. The ground-floor office space and 9 apartments (6 x 2 bdrm, 3 x 1 bdrm) above would be accessed from Canonmills and Warriston Rd (23/06328/FUL).

Lovers of buff brickwork and tedious grey metal cladding will not be disappointed. Apologists for the scheme like its efficient use of space and accommodation of permanent rather than transient residents.

Neighbouring critics say the plan is obnoxiously dull and overbearing in a confined space, would reduce their daylighting and exacerbate flood risks. The New Town & Broughton Community Council (NTBCC) has added its voice to their objections.

ALL GO AT T&E

In response to a motion by Cllr Mowat, the Transport & Environment Cmte will report back in Jan on:

- To which committee outstanding Tram Project defects should be reported, who will remedy them and monitor progress, out of which budget.

- Outstanding snagging and defect resolution of footways, cycleways and public realm.

- The condition of roads used as diversion routes during tramworks. Who will pay for their restoration?

In other T&E news, enforcement of new parking regulations in Edinburgh will begin in Jan [bit.ly/pavpkg]. Double parking and inconsiderate and obstructive parking on footways and dropped kerbs will now be punishable by £100 fines. Thanks to Scottish Govt concessions, delivery drivers will be exempt unless they block footways or emergency vehicles.

A report to the T&E Cmte in Nov identified how many streets in each Council ward suffered significant levels of footway parking: Inverleith, 8; City Centre, 5; Leith Walk, 24.

And finally ... When enforcement of Edinburgh's city-centre Low Emission Zone begins next June, NTBCC wants additional monitoring of air quality and traffic levels by the Council in adjacent thoroughfares outwith the LEZ. The fear is that Broughton's quiet cross-routes may clog up with fume-belching old bangers whose drivers want the cheapest routes across town.



PICARDY PLACE – ONGOING MYSTERY

Tree planting took place on the Picardy Pl Fantasy Island in Nov. In related news, NTBCC has at long last received a response to its Freedom of Information request to the Council about the design of this new public asset. But officials have not included the planned dimensions of footways and cycle paths, the very information NTBCC wanted in order to check the space had been properly allocated. What is the Council concealing?

TATTY BYE TO ELM ROW

On 18 November, the shutters came down on Tattie Shaw's after a final day of trading. We were lucky to have this excellent greengrocer's in our community for 26 years. James Welby and his team made the effort to source high-quality produce from Glasgow fruit market and smaller suppliers in Fife and beyond over the years, and this dedication required very early starts and long hours. He will be much missed by his customers (and their carrot-loving dogs). It's the end of an era on Elm Row.—*Mary Cryan*



TECHNIQUE AND TRUTH



Image: Lyon & Turnbull.

William Strang's 'Girl with a Fan' (1912) was auctioned at the Broughton Place Lyon & Turnbull in early Dec. Dumbarton-born Strang (1859–1921) was noted for his unsentimental portraits of women, evoking their 'character, modernity and intellect' and eschewing the 'pretty-pretty'. In the excellent auction catalogue [bit.ly/LTLot121], this painting (probably of the artist's daughter Nancy) is described as 'concurrently truthful to its subject, decoratively appealing and enigmatic in atmosphere'. It was estimated to fetch between £15k and £20k.

STLs STILL PROBLEMATIC

As predicted, the Council is struggling to process a flood of short-term-let applications. Planning has determined only about 10% of the 600+ applications it has received since Oct. Licensing has considered only around 200 of 3.6k applications. Some £2.5m+ raised so far from licence fees will help resource the system, but without further recruitment staff will continue to struggle.

Some are worried that unscrupulous STL landlords might game the system by misrepresenting 'secondary lets' as 'home lets' (the latter being those where the property, or part of it, comprises the host's only or principal home). By doing so they could circumvent the need to get planning permission.

Licensing convener Cllr Jo Mowat agrees that the current system is 'open to abuse', but says Licensing has a strong enough enforcement team to investigate issues if there is evidence of wrongdoing. Cllr Caldwell says no such instances are known to have arisen to date.

Meanwhile, a fresh judicial review has been mounted by operators in the Court of Session, this time challenging whether Edinburgh's STL control area (and the requirement to apply for planning consent) can, as the Council contends, apply to STLs which were already in business before the control area began in Sept.



Briefly



Image: Simon Holledge.

The presence of a vintage tour bus parked outside the **National Monument** sparked controversy on social media in Nov. Most respondents agreed able-bodied tourists should have **no right of motor access** to Calton Hill's summit, especially if travelling in antique vehicles blowing out noxious fumes (the buses not the tourists). A few objected to the fact that it was a **red London Routemaster**, presumably honking in Cockney and lacking the **maroon-and-cream tones** of the traditional Edinburgh bus-scape.

Circus Lane resident Clive Johnson-Cooper was the judges' favourite in the *Gardener's World Gardens of the Year competition 2023*. His 3m² space, reclaimed from the ruins of an old outhouse, is filled with subtropical plants carefully chosen for their **large, leafy foliage** to provide a range of shades, shapes and sizes. See [bit.ly/weeleafy] for images. Johnson-Cooper is also responsible for most of the street planting in Circus Lane.

Tracy Gilbert, who lives in the constituency, has been selected as Labour's candidate for the Westminster **Edinburgh North & Leith** seat at the next general election.

The **Kingsford Group** has gained temporary (3-year) planning consent for a single-storey modular working research lab outside **154 McDonald Rd** [bit.ly/154McD]. The application attracted 18 letters of support, many of them from past and present members of staff, others anonymous, a few from as far afield as **Linlithgow and Dalton-in-Furness**. Most expressed very similar enthusiasms in almost identical language.

Shops and offices which gradually increase the number of items they sell for **consumption on the premises** can effectively become cafés without matching the exacting and sometimes expensive standards required of the genuine article. This leads, critics say, to **unfair competition** and risks **unsafe or insufficiently insured premises** operating below residential properties. Councillors are being urged to insist on stricter enforcement. In related news, **Leith Central Community Council** (LCCC) has recently objected to an application for 'street coffee' on **Elm Row**, citing overprovision, unfair competition, street clutter and likely littering.

Longstone (2) Ltd voluntarily seeks preapplication talks with LCCC to discuss repurposing the **Manderston St** Bingo Hall (Club 3000 transfers to Ocean Terminal next year). 'The desire to retain and conserve the building [in a **Conservation Area**] does restrict its potential uses, and we would very much welcome the opportunity to talk you through this,' they say. **Call us suspicious**, but *Spurtle* detects the tottiest bowf o brumstane.

The **Bearded Baker** will open new and larger premises, 71 steps away, at **22 Rodney St** in the New Year.

The Black Axe Throwing Company on **Beaverhall Rd** has cut its losses and closed.

Waiter, is there a bug in my soup?

An unusual café is coming to refurbished premises at 1 Gayfield Sq. The space forms part of a new centre for an organisation called SAFE. Here, 4 rooms will be used to demonstrate use of the Internet of Things in information gathering and sharing within the hospitality environment.

While the 4-table café is intended primarily for those attending courses here, it is also described as 'an example of a live public facing venue which gives us the basis of information which can be monitored and collected. [...] The office space and the secure CCTV and Communications room shows where and how this data will be captured and processed securely before being presented back to interested parties in a readable report.'

Will customers be advised if the teapot is monitoring their body language or the tureen is listening in to the conversation? We don't know.

We first reported plans for SAFE's £275k transformation of the Gayfield Sq property in May 2021 [bit.ly/1GyfdSq], but clear details of intended activities emerged only in a recent change-of-use application including class 10 for the serving of alcohol during corporate fund-raiser events (23/04307/FUL).

In a supporting document, SAFE describes itself as a charitable organisation with 'an overall aim of supporting public safety'. Confusingly, on the Register of Scottish Charities (SC050592), its objects are listed as the prevention and relief of poverty, in particular by providing education, training, rehabilitation, support, jobs and personal development.

In part because of this confusion, some Gayfield residents regard the application for class 10 usage with suspicion.

Disquiet on the western front

An application to change the 'Monastery' at 2 Hart St Lane has been refused (23/03905/LBC). The Chief Planning Officer said alterations to mutual boundary walls would reduce fabric and character contrary to statutory requirements about preserving the listed building and Conservation Area's character.

The applicant and a neighbour to the west were divided over ownership and demolition of a garden wall. They differed too about the building's age. One said the building dates from the first half of the 18th century and precedes the construction of Forth St. The other said the building dates from 1860 onwards (after Forth St was built) and that the proposer's architect had stated as much in an earlier application. The structure, they claimed, is not the one constructed as a Huguenot chapel for French weavers on Picardy Pl. The accompanying planning history for the property was also questioned.

Objections relating to overlooking and loss of privacy did not feature in the CPO's decision, nor did an alleged lack of detail and a proposal to gate-off Hart St Lane.

Yet another neighbour – this one a professional architect – said the plan would help fight 'more tedious suburban sprawl'. The Architectural History Society of Scotland objected to a new door and window at ground-floor level. Surprising photos of the building's interior are at [bit.ly/2HtStL].



Broughton Market

Edinburgh-based Broughton No 1 Ltd has applied to extend and alter the office building at 1 Broughton Market and convert it into a 9-bdrm aparthotel (bit.ly/BrMkt). These plans supersede earlier ones for a rooftop extension and short-term-let use. Some locals say even quiet tourists' wheelie-cases are disruptive early in the morning and late at night. New Town & Broughton Community Council prefers this application to an earlier iteration but would rather the building remain a 'place of business'. Failing that, it would favour conversion to permanent homes over aparthotel accommodation. A determination is expected by 22 Dec.



Friends of Calton Hill

Friends of Calton Hill [bit.ly/FoCH] last month considered gas bubbles, feldspar crystals, sedimentary deposits, glacial gouging, conglomerates and tectonic plates. Not while reviewing Collective Gallery rock cakes but on a deep dive into ancient history led by Scottish Geology Trust's Angus Miller. To some who endured poor teaching of the subject at school, the focus of this walk perhaps offered no vestige of a beginning and no prospect of an end. In practice, though, Miller's enthusiasm for 340m-year-old lava flows and 20k-year-old ice-polished basalt proved thoroughly engaging.

Domestic history set in stone

Leslie Hills moved to a dilapidated ground-floor flat at 10 Scotland St in 1974. Years later, after she'd paid off the mortgage, a solicitor passed her the deeds – documents she used painstakingly to frame the history of a home.

Not just of *her* home, but that of successive families and generations who have shared this building's steps and bedrooms, keys, locks, odd plumbing and doorknobs, taps, creaks cobwebs and idiosyncratic hearths for nearly 200 years.

She weaves the story of the house – its foibles and those of its inhabitants and neighbours – into a wider history of the capital's social, civic and architectural development. Her book ranges from domestic intimacies to accounts of national and international trade, politics and colonialism. And, usefully, she evidences how the eastern New Town has never been that smug unvariegated seat of cultural and financial privilege much caricatured today.

Hills proceeds with thorough scholarship, scrupulous acknowledgement of sources, and a generous list of resources which other researchers will find useful in future.

She deploys self-deprecating humour and deadpan irony. Above all, she writes really well: fluent, authoritative, persuasive prose, sometimes anecdotal, often slyly colliding formality and contemporary colloquialism.

Edmund Burke described society as 'A partnership between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born.' Hills' book sits at the heart of just such a 3-way conversation, arriving at an insightful study of past 'people like us' and, in microcosm, of Edinburgh's peculiar social experiment and work in progress: the Second New Town. Recommended.—AM

Scotland Street Press, ISBN: 978-1-910895-733, £24.99 (hbk)



10 Scotland Street

Leslie Hills

'This is a triumph. A love letter to the ghosts of Edinburgh.

'I feel its hand upon my shoulder' - SARA SHERIDAN

Briefly



Edinburgh World Heritage launched a new website in Nov boasting better security, accessibility, navigability and grant forms [<https://ewh.org.uk>]. Also new is the logo shown above, featuring an **Old Town crow-stepped gable and Georgian fanlight** picked out in a colour reminiscent of yesteryear's nicotine-stained stonemasons.

The 5-bdrm trapezoid house at **64 Broughton Rd** has gone on the market at offers over £1.15m. A virtual tour of the skewed but spotless **Sceabhach** is available at [bit.ly/64BrRd].

The **Scottish Beacon**, of which the Spurtle is a founding member, was shortlisted last month in the 'Innovation of the Year' category at the **Press Gazette British Journalism Awards 2023** [bit.ly/PGgong]. Winners will be announced on 14 Dec.

The retrospective application for planning approval of 2 new stores and an external pergola at the Herringbone Café in **Royal Ter Gdns** has been refused (23/02729/FUL). Officials told Buzzworks Holdings that the additions' **poor and inappropriate design** was detrimental to the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and the **design, form, choice of materials** and positioning of the extension were **incompatible with the character** of the existing building. It was formerly a much-loved public convenience.

After complaints from individuals and amenity groups, the Trams Project Team has agreed to remove new concrete benches and rusty planters from **Blenheim Pl**. Improved tactile paving will alert pedestrians to the **change in footway level**. Activists also want better benches, secure bike racks and litter bins here.

Officials are consulting on whether to alter **street trading and market operations** in Edinburgh and if so when, for how long, selling what kind of products, where and with what **aesthetic principles informing their design**. At a public meeting last month, one Cassandra decried the possibility of any such '**cruddy little gashlines**' cluttering George St. Have your say here [bit.ly/Edstmkj] by **13 Dec**.

Dunedin Street (Edinburgh) LLP proposes student housing for **26 Dunedin St** (23/05027/FUL). The 73 studio apartments would occupy a **5-storey building** of astonishing blandness. We reported it first online here [bit.ly/bitdull]. Public reaction was not positive.

The next meeting of the **Broughton History Society** will be its Christmas soirée on 4 Dec. Then on 8 Jan, **Iain Gordon Brown** will talk about 'Auld Greekie'. Details at [bit.ly/BrHSoc].

Spurtle is running an online **Christmas puzzle** from 1–25 December. One clue a day, starting with hard ones and getting easier towards the end. Visit Breaking news at [bit.ly/SpBrkNws].

City cemeteries – a time and a place

Reader Janice Johnson is concerned about disrespectful visitors in Rosebank Cemetery. She says some people seem to regard it as an extension of Pilrig Park, sitting on graves, exercising, playing sport, and allowing dogs off the lead to romp and defecate. Such actions, she says, disturb and offend those still mourning loved ones here. Others we have spoken to acknowledge the problem but welcome broad use of city cemeteries (within bounds). They say regular footfall provides 'natural surveillance' which discourages vandalism and worse forms of criminal behaviour. We welcome your views.

No festive jingle for Taco Bell

The Development Management Sub-Cmte has refused an attempt to let Taco Bell operate its customary cooking equipment without high-level ventilation at 6 Picardy Pl (bit.ly/efflva). The alternatives, agreed the DMS, would not safeguard residential amenity. For now, anyone interested in Taco Bell's colourful quesadilla cravings, cheesy fries and volcano burritos can find them on Shandwick Pl, particularly at weekends.

Changing Christmas custom creeps north

*Adapted from the Edinburgh Evening News,
25 December 1878.*

The advent of Christmas has this year been marked, as far as regards weather, by those characteristic features with which it has always been associated. It continues frosty, with the lochs and ponds in the neighbourhood of the city covered by large crowds of skaters and curlers.

As customary, service was conducted in the various Roman Catholic Churches in Edinburgh at midnight.

The general commercial depression, to judge by the paucity of the Christmas display in the windows of dealers in fancy and bazaar goods, has told on the trading community. It does not, however, appear materially to have affected the way in which the general public are keeping Christmas. The English custom of its celebration seems to be rapidly increasing, especially in the southern and eastern districts of Scotland.

In the General Post Office a larger number of letters and packets have passed through the sorting-room than on any previous occasion. As a consequence, the sorters have been kept busy all night, and the two morning town deliveries have had to be amalgamated. As an instance of the increase of the traffic, the delivery of one postman, which is usually only an armful, was to-day—besides letters, which are the more numerous—a sackful of packages.

The banks, Custom-house, and public offices in Leith were all closed to-day, and a number of the merchants' offices in the afternoon. Some of the foreign vessels in the docks were decorated with bunting.



Moreover ...

Nuveen Real Estate has been granted planning consent for an upper-case W to adorn the hotel of the same name in **St James Sq** (23/06282/ADV). The latest proposal for the 2.5m x 1.8m sign is to wrap it in **Bronze Rimax** matching the façade 'ribbon' to which it would attach. This way no-one will notice it [bit.ly/GturdW]. Some wish a **similar principle** had been applied to the building itself. A decision is expected by 15 Dec.

Officials will meet members of the Edinburgh Access Panel, Living Streets, the Edinburgh Bus Users Group, Spokes and NTBCC to address pedestrian/cyclist conflicts at the **Elm Row floating bus stop**. Most people outwith the Council have long agreed that having 2 cycleways bracketing the stop is a bad idea. In March 2024, the **Transport & Environment Cmte** will consider a report on the possibility of pedestrianising Elm Row on one day per week.

Stand by for a new residents association representing **Windsor St, Elm Row, Leopold Pl and Montgomery St W (WELM)**. Details here [bit.ly/WELM1]. Perhaps wisely they have elected not to order themselves Montgomery St W, Elm Row, Windsor St and Leopold Pl (MEWL).

The **Development Management Sub-Cmte** will consider new plans for homes and student housing around **Eyre Pl** at a hearing on 6 Dec. Our coverage will appear online.

Restoration Forth has reintroduced 30k 'Scottish' oysters into the Firth after the creatures' 100-year absence. The bivalves disappeared due to **overfishing and industrial pollution**. Oyster reefs improve water quality and provide habitats for fish, crabs and sponges. **Spurtle welcomes this initiative** but advises vigilance in case of a corresponding and **uncontrolled** increase in Leith's population of invasive seafood chefs.

A recurring theme across north and central Edinburgh for months has been **how disappointing** much-vaunted public-realm 'improvements' end up being in reality. Street furniture, absence or loss of greenery, Leith Walk drainage, and the no-left-turn into London Rd have all caused consternation. NTBCC now seeks a **strategic reconsideration** of how such projects are conceived and realised.

Fortitude Coffee has now left its **York Pl** premises. Alternative branches close to Spurtleshire are at **Hamilton Pl** and, since Nov, **Abbey Mount**.

Drummond CHS is considering setting up an alumni network to help connect today's students with their **illustrious and successful** forebears. To help gauge likely numbers and interest, former pupils are invited to join a **LinkedIn group** here [bit.ly/oldDCHS].

Upmarket fabric and wallpaper design studio **Timorous Beasts** is to open a showroom at **33 Northumberland St**.

This is the Dec issue of 2023 and the Jan issue of 2024. **We publish next in Feb** as sunny weather returns and **Spurtle** staff slip again into bikinis and Speedos to report the news. Until then, we wish all our readers a very **Merry Christmas and Happy New Year**.

Spurtle Team: E. Dickie, J. Dickie, C. Ellis, J. Hart, M. Hart, D. Hill, A. McIntosh, S. Michael, M. Orr, W. Quinn, C. Roussot, E. Roussot, T. Smith, D. Sterratt, E. Taylor-Smith.

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Leith Central Community Council

LCCC seeks 2 local people to take key roles as Chair and Vice Chair. Guidance on offer from experienced members. Next meeting on 15 January 2024, McDonald Road Library.

For more information contact: <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:

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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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