

## The Benefit trap

At a time of major upheaval in the welfare system, **Spurtle** wants to know what it all means for people living in Broughton. How does the system treat them now, and what difference are the changes making? Norma McKendrick of Melgund Terrace is unemployed herself, and regularly meets others with a variety of experiences at the job club she attends.

Beat the poverty trap! Take 3 jobs - who wants to take 3 jobs? Well, the way this government is going we'll all have to take 3 jobs - to make ends meet, that is. There are millions out there living in poverty, and the benefits system leaves a lot to be desired. I actually know people who have 3 jobs, because of low pay they have to do this - and they're not living in luxury I can tell you!

Single parents are only 'better off' because they can claim FIS. I actually

know parents who are worse off working even with childcare allowances. It's the system - it's not working!

Now they have the 'New Deal' for 18-24 year olds. I dread to think what they're cooking up for the 25s+. They're exploiting people on these training-for-work schemes. Most of them are a farce: they're only using people for their own means and then take on others so they do not have to fill any vacancies which may arise, as they know they'll always get someone through training. There are many who have been on these schemes for an extra tenner a week and are out of pocket through this as well, have to contribute to their travelling expenses.

There are a lot of people out there who genuinely want to work and are caught by the benefit trap. Something drastic will have to be done to rectify this.

## What a life!



Here's the eighth in our series on Broughton folk with interesting jobs or other activities.

Jack Blaik of Claremont Bank is a special kind of social worker. Six months ago he was offered the post of Independent Living Fund specialist within the Social Work Department (SWD) for a year. The ILF was created in 1988 as a government trust fund to make direct payments to people with severe physical or learning disabilities in the community to allow them to employ their own carers.

Social workers are aware of this fund but only one or two out of every thirty clients receives this special support. According to Jack, it was partly by accident that his own clients had a high take-up rate but it has now resulted in him examining ways to

increase the overall rate more proactively.

Criteria for clients to receive ILF support (up to £300 per week) are tightly defined: age 16-65; already receiving the highest rate of Disability Living Allowance and £200 worth of services from the SWD. Jack tries to find such people by general promotion and advice, searching the SWD database and approaching the allocated social worker - or he can handle the application himself.

More than most people, Jack has a special insight into the importance and difficulties of this task. His son, Daniel, has a rare metabolic disease and needs constant care. Consequently he and his wife Nancy, who is blind, have first-hand experience of applying for ILF support - successfully 5 years ago.

The long-term benefits are extra quality of life for the client and family, more time available for other SWD clients, and ultimately savings for the

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SWD. Jack intends that his work will lead to better guidance and training of social workers. If he meets his own performance criteria, he hopes that in future his work can continue - until it's no longer necessary.

Daniel's carer was able to accompany the family to Nancy's presentation of her MBE, which she received from the Queen in February for her fundraising work for the Sick Kids Metabolic Diseases Unit. A double bonus showing ILF in action!

For further information on the ILF, contact Jack on 669 9121.

## SPURTLE team for this issue:

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# BROUGHTON Spurtle

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## Drummond in the doldrums

In spring this year we followed the sad story of confusion over just how much money had been promised for developments at our local Community High School. Subsequent dialogue between School Board and Education Department doesn't seem to have resolved anything. And now we hear the parent chairing the Board has resigned, fed-up and disillusioned.

Some improvements to the building are due during the summer holidays. Best wishes to all at Drummond for a well-earned break. We hope they'll return with renewed strength to cope with those councillors and officials!

## Powderhall housing

The City Council objected to plans for a housing development on the site of the Powderhall Stadium, but an appeal to the Secretary of State has led to approval. The plans include "water features" - creative thinking on the area's history of flooding! The first phase of the project is due to start at the Logie Green Road end of the site.

## East London Street alert

Objections to a first proposal for the garage site on the north side of East London Street (no.24) were successful. But now a new application has just been submitted. We haven't had time to see the details, but it seems that it still includes shops, "flatted dwellings", car park and offices. There's still plenty of time to go and have a look at the plans at the Planning office in Cockburn Street - and write in with objections if that turns out to be necessary.

## Take-away trouble

Residents in McDonald Place have been campaigning against a hot take-away van in the Street next door. They won the support of the Community Council, and of City Council officials' reports on smell, noise and traffic.

In June councillors on the Licensing Board split 4/4 on the issue, but the casting vote from the chair went in favour of the residents. Success! Then they heard that the vendor was applying for a new licence, and the issue would have to be considered all over again. When **Spurtle** spoke to resident Bill Bowes the position wasn't clear: will they have to start again from scratch, calling for objections against the new application?

## Parking puzzle

David Watt of Bellevue Place writes: The 24 parking spaces in my street have been reduced by 8 due to the extended stay of the Roads Department wagon train PLUS the permanent 3 spaces reserved for the 3 doctors based at No.27 - who have now moved to the new Bellevue Medical Centre, which has its own car park. According to the Roads Department at 2 Cockburn Street, it requires a special request to them for the 3 spaces to be returned to general use - followed by a wait of up to TWO YEARS!

## Incinerator protest

Residents in the Readbraes area have been complaining about unacceptable noise from the Powderhall incinerator - the plant has evidently been working 24 hours recently. The Council's Environmental Department has promised to see what can be done.

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## McDonald Road

If the residents of McDonald Road feel confused, who's to blame them! The big investment promised by City planners in road improvements there has been - you've guessed it - cut back! So the much-needed and long-awaited upgrading has become, at best, a piecemeal prospect. What exactly is intended will no doubt become clearer in due course - **Spurtle** will let you know.

## Threat to sue Spurtle

In last month's report on speculation about the future of the Health Club in East Claremont Street, we named Charles McKinlay as "landlord" of the premises. Mr McKinlay contacted us to protest: he's not the landlord, his wife is. Research at Company House confirmed that ownership lies with Pauline McKinlay, not Charles; according to the records there his formal connection is as company secretary of the Claremont Health Club, registered in March this year.

We regret this inaccuracy - and hope Mr McKinlay no longer intends attempting legal action against us. He also sought to reassure **Spurtle** that there were no grounds for local anxiety, saying the intention is to run the Health Club as before.

Locals understand recent alterations at the Health Club are due to be considered by the Licensing Board when it meets on 29th June - after this edition of **Spurtle** has gone to print. Several local residents have let us know that they have written letters voicing concerns to Board, MP, councillor and police as suggested by the local Residents Association.



# What future for Mansfield Place Church?

The church building in Mansfield Place and surrounding land is now owned by the Mansfield Traquair Trust (MTT) and is on a 20-year lease to the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, who will use the lower, garden floor as their national headquarters.

**Spurtle** asked Hilary Campbell, Deputy Director of SCVO, how the building would be used:

- The whole of the lower floor will be converted into an open-plan office with several smaller meeting rooms for use by their 35-40 staff. For security reasons this basement area, currently used by Café Graffiti, will definitely not be available for public access.
- The almost derelict clergy house on the north-east side will become a kitchen and staff room.
- At the west end a mezzanine floor will connect by a new staircase to the existing baptistry on the south-west corner, a lift will be installed for disabled access. This area may be accessible to the public.
- The main part of the church will remain largely unaltered, except for a new raised floor. The west, reception end and the east end of this floor will probably be partitioned using glazed screens to create further meeting, greeting and training spaces. The nave itself will be big enough to contain large groups of people for SCVO and

public events. (The plan of the ground floor shown below is an early version, and is constantly being updated).

## What about community access?

SCVO are required to guarantee public access as part of their lease agreement. Campbell says that 'community' to her means the local Broughton community, the City of Edinburgh, the voluntary organisations of Scotland that they represent, and the lovers of Phoebe Traquair's work. The SCVO takes its responsibility to these communities seriously. She says there is a lack of meeting places of this size with disabled access in Edinburgh, and she is keen to see the building being put to as wide a use as possible.

## Possibilities?

She is keen to hear suggestions from anybody for use of the space (through these pages or direct to SCVO). The building will be available more often than people might think: most evenings and weekends, for example. The building is likely to be available for hire by groups, whatever their financial resources.

The nave would be ideal for weddings, conferences, concerts, jazz, small operas, etc. These require a statutory number of public toilets, which will be built into the fabric. So

no more portaloos! She thinks it unlikely that the Trustees of MTT or the Friends of Mansfield Place Church will object to an alcohol licence for such events.

Public access to view the murals will not be unlimited but may be dependent on staffing arrangements - by the Friends, for example.

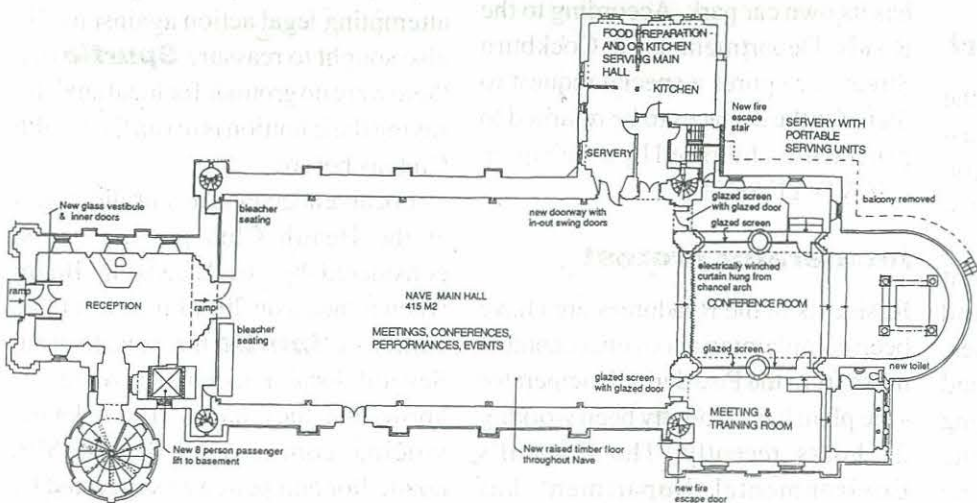
## No more evening drinks in the garden?

There will be limited parking spaces at the back of the building, including several for disabled use. SCVO have not yet decided what to do with the rest of the garden space, particularly at the lower level. They are open to suggestions. If they can also acquire the strip of land between the church and the school, they hope to eradicate the eyesore it is at present.

## What about Café Graffiti?

Campbell believes that Graffiti have been useful tenants, helping to keep the building heated, and almost wind and water tight (not enough for the murals unfortunately). And the basement has provided a popular nightclub type of venue in the area for several years. However, SCVO and the Trust do not think it unreasonable for Café Graffiti to look for somewhere else, having been given nearly two years' notice.

Hilary Campbell says emphatically that SCVO wants to expand the public use of the building. When we asked her whether, in Pete Simpson of Café Graffiti's words, it will "foster and enjoy the loyalty and support of a brand new, broad, eclectic and enthusiastic congregation", her response was a resounding "Yes!" Let's hope that is true.



# Banging the Drum

**Spurtle** said as much back in March! When it comes to filling the gap site on Leith Street, a developer's flat-pack 'concept' just won't do. And on 10th June the City Council Planning Committee came to the same conclusion. "Bland and uninspiring" was one description of the plans for the Warner Village Cinema Complex, as the planners were told to go away and think again about The Drum development.

Having already made massive investment in selling the idea to the public, the developers are unlikely to walk away now. They might take the Council's criticisms to heart to some degree or they might make an application to the Secretary of State,

# Local boy loses sock!

Not quite the usual headline grabber. Except on this occasion a new "laundodiner" has made quite an impact on the corner of East London Street, celebrating just such an unlikely sounding event!

Steven Blaikie first had the idea for the 'Lost Sock Diner' several years ago when he had a study in the basement of the premises occupied by the laundrette. It seemed obvious to him - while your washing's being taken care of, the diner will take care of you. Why hadn't anyone else thought of it? Maybe that's just one of life's unanswered questions - like, where did that other sock go when the machine was emptied?

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triggering a Public Local Enquiry. Either way, this is but one stage in a process of ensuring that - as it must - it all comes right in the end.

This isn't any old gap site! This is a natural valley, overlooked by the open spaces of the Calton Hill, designated a World Heritage site: by any standards an outstanding town centre asset - and right on Broughton's doorstep.

Let's be clear. No-one wants to hold back progress. Indeed it's demoralising that such visible dereliction should have blighted this prime spot for so long. What is wanted is the individuality and imagination to make this the upbeat, uptown place we've waited for for too long. Keep making your views known - this time they count! Contact your councillor; or the Cockburn Association (557 8686), a major objector to the original plans - and keep **Spurtle** informed.

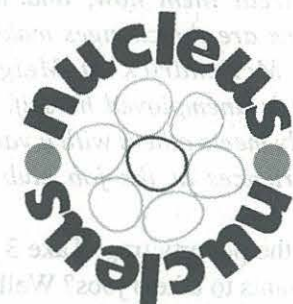


The Diner's clientele aren't just the wash-weary. Opening hours are between 7am and 11pm - they vary a bit depending on the day of the week. Steven plans to get a licence and to use his permit for pavement tables right round the corner of the entire diner/laundrette site. A really imaginative and reasonable menu in relaxed and tasteful surroundings is already attracting both local regulars and the visitors increasingly seen enjoying the expanding facilities around Broughton Street. The diner hopes to add to this with special "events" evenings.

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# NUCLEUS

'Nucleus', in Broughton Place, is a charity which offers a range of free services to parents and carers of children with special needs. Current services include:



- Thursday morning drop-in sessions during term-time, where parents or carers can come along for informal information and advice
- Weekend workshops dealing with such topics as the professional services, planning your child's future, coping with stress
- Fortnightly Saturday siblings clubs which include sports, craft activities and outings
- Confidential counselling
- Family befriending project which matches trained volunteer befrienders with families who need some extra support to enjoy family outings or other leisure activities at home.

Anyone who wants to find out more about these services, or who might be interested in volunteering as a befriender, shouldn't hesitate to get in touch. The Nucleus office at 39 Broughton Place is open Monday to Friday, 9.30am-1.30pm. Or phone 556 8066 and ask for Jane.

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