

Belle's View



Hi fans

BRRRRRRR! Snow is falling and Broughton and Bellevue is looking fabulous under a thick blanket of snow and a sprinkling of glittering frost - it covers up all the doggy do and the holes in the pavements anyway!

I see our local floral experts, Narcissus of Broughton Street, were recently awarded the accolade of Best

Valentine's Bouquet by the Scotsman, with their gorgeous array of red anemones, deep pink roses and lilac tulips. Leurve bouquets are not all they do though readers - if you're looking for something a wee bit unusual in the greenery department, get along there and have a rummage in their jungle!

Advance warning now of Drummond High School's Festival of Learning day on 24 March. News this year is that the Broughton History Society will be there to lure unsuspecting visitors into joining with tales of the societies' wild parties!! All the other local societies will be represented too, so be there or stay pig ignorant - it's up to you!

Imagine my surprise, dear readers, when I went to buy some fishfood for my little Horace, and instead found myself tightly clamped under a hairdryer after getting a pink rinse. Yes, trendy coiffeurs The Egg have moved into the premises previously occupied by The Aquatic Centre at the top of Broughton Street. So now you have absolutely no excuse for that dragged through a hedge backwards look, which is so lowering to the tone of the area (that means you, students!).

Till next time, just do it!

Persephone Belle

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 Volunteer panel members are invited from time to time to take part in the department's research studies and make a vital contribution to our work.
 For further details, contact **Catherine Derrick**,
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BRIEFLY
 The Friends of Mansfield Place Church invite you to a symposium about the **Phoebe Anna Traquair Murals**. It's on Tuesday 27th March, 6.30-8.30pm, in Lecture Hall B, David Hume Tower, George Square. Tickets are £6: for further information contact Kate Love - 556 1488.

Spurgle team for this issue:
 Norma McKendrick, David Aitken, Ken McKay, Gavin MacGregor, John Dickie, Alan McIntosh and Tim Puntis.
BROUGHTON BOOKS in Broughton Place are our "postbox". You can put a letter addressed to us through their letter box at any time.
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BROUGHTON Spurgle

No 79

March 2001

Action on litter

Help to
Clean Up Broughton
Saturday 10th March
10am to 12 noon
 Join us to pick up litter
 Meet at the roundabout,
 foot of Broughton Street, on
 the launderette corner
Gloves, tools and bags supplied
 by the City Council
 (Organised by the
 Clean Up Broughton group)

Local residents have organised a 'litter day' for Saturday, 10th March, with practical support from the Council. For two hours that morning, volunteers will clear up litter around the foot of Broughton Street - and beyond.

The timing's right. The City Council have just set up a Task Force with special responsibility for cleaning streets, litter removal, weeding and grass cutting in Broughton and three neighbouring wards. So local people should be able to work with a team of Council staff who have a chance to get to know our area.

The Task Force leader is Willie Wilson. His mobile phone number is 07788 150314.

Broughton Spurgle is free and completely independent



Jean Bell of Bellevue Street wrote to us about litter round the corner in Melgund Terrace, with photos taken on a Sunday to illustrate the mess. "The bag uplift had taken place, as usual, around 7.30am on the previous Friday, and the next uplift was due on Tuesday. This lot started collecting on the Friday night." Some of the rubbish is brought from elsewhere, and dumped beside the bin outside the corner shop.

Fire in London Street

An eyewitness account of the recent drama
 The first we knew, glass was exploding and flames were leaping from the back window of the flat opposite.

A call to the fire brigade, a coat over my nightdress, I rushed round to help, certain people could be trapped. There was smoke, but not overwhelming and students from

the flat above were already on the stairs, barefoot and wrapped in dressing gowns and blankets. Below, an elderly and disabled couple had to be roused - thankfully, at last, a response. But there was nothing from the flat where it had all started so I went farther up the stair, by now coughing from the smoke. In a way, all looked so normal. Two front doors - except that behind one was a terrible roaring, it was bulging and the paint was peeling from it ...

Then the stair filled with firemen - there was nothing more I could do. And the flat had been empty.

It has taken me two weeks to sleep properly at night. I hope I continue to do so.



Our man in Taiwan

This report from Mure Dickie, **Spurtle** contact (and Financial Times Correspondent) in Taiwan's capital, Taipei.



David Steel MSP has been visiting far-flung parts – as Spurtle discovered when it caught up with him in Taipei.

Steel was there to build ties between Scotland and Taiwan, no small matter given that Taiwanese companies are some of the biggest investors in Scotland's high-tech sector.

The Lothians MSP was also reviewing Taiwan's transformation from dictatorship to democracy in little more than a decade – and finding out that Chen Shui-bian, Taiwan's dissident-turned-president, is a big fan of the film 'Braveheart'!

Of more direct relevance to Steel's work was a chance to meet his counterpart in the Taiwanese legislature, Wang Jin-pyng.

Steel heads the "Corporate Body" guiding the parliament's development, and **Spurtle** can now reveal that it is set to advise MSPs *not* to allow a large

video screen in the debating chamber (as is much used in Taiwan) – nor indeed computers on MSPs' desks (as are permitted in the Welsh Assembly). A vote against video looks a good idea if the sensational way Taiwanese legislators use their screen is anything to go by; while Steel worries that computers on MSPs' desks might turn them into "automatons" living off information flashed in by research assistants.

For its part, Taiwan could probably learn from Scotland's parliament – particularly its lack of physical violence and the studiously neutral role demanded of its presiding officer. While Steel left the Scottish Liberal Democrats to take up his post, Taiwan's Mr Wang has been in the thick of the Nationalist Party's political war against President Chen, a campaign that has hamstrung the government.

Still, Steel's neutrality has a downside: it makes him a rather passive **Spurtle** reader. "I can't join in any of (the **Spurtle's**) campaigns because I'm not allowed to take part in any political activities," he says. "It is frustrating, but it is also quite a good safeguard that I can't get involved in anything that might come before the parliament ... Which is why I keep saying that I now have no views on anything."

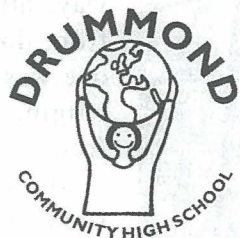
Drummond's future

To recap! The Council is going into partnership with a private contractor to run Drummond. Bids closed on 19th October 2000 and two short-listed contenders were taken forward to 20th December, when a final selection was to be announced. Public consultation was promised for "the spring" and a potential start-date given of May 2001. By the end of January, the Education Department

were still "hoping" for "clarification" within six weeks – on to mid-March.

Now, in the Spring 2001 'Labour Update' constituency newsletter, "it is *hoped* the preferred option can be chosen *before the summer*" whilst "it is *expected* that there will be public consultation on the plans *"during the course of the year"* (our italics).

Please – just tell us what is happening!



Local action needed now

Spurtle supports the City Council's plans to further restrict the flow of traffic on Princes Street. But we're worried by lack of progress on related measures to manage traffic in the Broughton area.

We look forward to a Princes Street that's a safer and more pleasant place – for both visitors and locals like ourselves. Proposed changes there are part of a wider strategy to tackle traffic issues in Edinburgh. Recent setbacks have been widely reported: the collapse of the City Car Club, problems with the CERT project, and delays for the introduction of road tolls. But major improvements to bus services are still going ahead (£8.3 million from the Scottish government); new stations for the Crossrail scheme are still expected to open next year; and traffic orders have been approved for the City's first two mandatory 20mph zones, with legal work started for another zone covering much of Broughton

There's disagreement over some of the Council's traffic proposals for our own area. For example, Drummond Civic Association supports restricted through traffic along London Street while others vehemently oppose it. Stephanie Harvey of Mansfield Place ("I've never been an activist before") has printed 300 leaflets arguing that this and similar road closures would simply concentrate traffic in already-overloaded Broughton Street (you can phone her on 557 2762).

As we argued in last month's **Spurtle**, Broughton Street needs urgent action – but the Council's current proposals seem to be a watered down version of what we'd hoped for. In particular, additional pedestrian crossings have given way to a mere traffic island (an old proposal we thought had long since been superseded!).

We hope more and more local energy will focus on pressing for something a lot better.

Big day at Drummond – Saturday 24th March

Festival of Learning
11am - 4pm
free entry

Dance shows, language stalls, cookery workshops, computer drop-in, art displays: a huge range of delights for the eye, ear, tastebuds and other senses!

And stalls and exhibitions by local voluntary and community groups, for anyone who wants to know more about what they do.

This could be a chance to change your whole way of life – or just find out a little more about a subject you've been thinking about! For more details, phone co-ordinator Fiona Shivas on 557 1490.

'Auld Reekie to Millennium City'
4 - 6pm
free public seminar

Our City Council has changed. Decisions are made differently now. Is the new council better or worse than before? Is it effective, efficient and accountable?

All are welcome to come along, have a say, and find out how local decisions are made, and how you can affect them.

If you have any specific requirements to help you take part, or you would like further information, please contact Carol Stobie – 557 1490.

Community Learning Plan
11am - 4pm

A display at the Festival of Learning, about getting together to make a comprehensive, integrated plan for learning in this area – for all ages and kinds of people. Drummond Community High School is already working together with other providers of learning to develop a partnership plan.

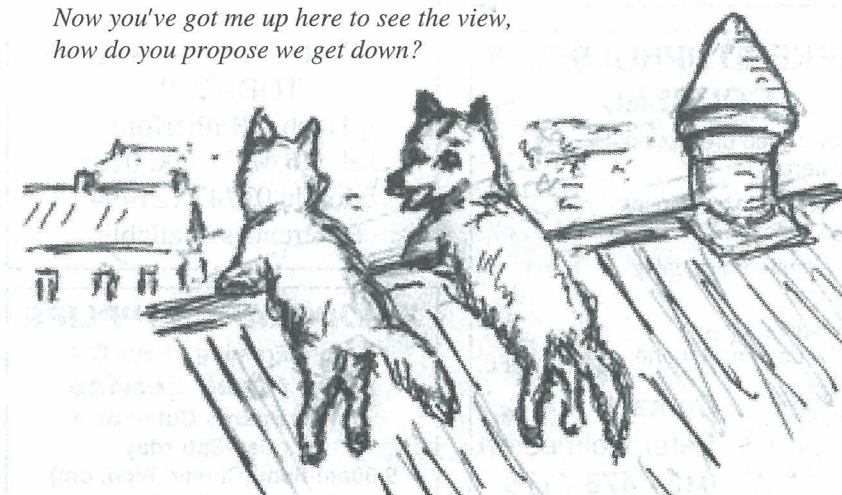
If you've got questions, demands, views, ideas or anything at all to say about this, come along and find out more on the 24th. Contact is Carol Stobie – 557 1490.

All at Drummond Community High School – Saturday, 24th March.

Fox on a cold tin roof

David and Helen Aitken of Bellevue Road rubbed their eyes in disbelief when they opened the kitchen curtains last Sunday morning. But a closer look through binoculars brought confirmation. There on the top of Lothian Buses' garage was a large dog fox with magnificent red rusty coat, its forepaws draped over the apex of the roof, "quite unconcerned"!

Now you've got me up here to see the view, how do you propose we get down?



Billy Crockett 1920-2001



Sadly we have lost one of our kenspeckle characters from Canonmills with the death of

Billy Crockett, a much-loved entertainer in our theatres, billed as 'Crotchett, the Mad Musician'.

Billy lived at Canonmills all his life, and learned his musical skills whilst attending the Boys Brigade under the leadership of Captain Tom Curr. Whilst still at Broughton School, he got a job at the Lyceum Theatre focusing the spotlights, which gave him a taste for the theatre. He eventually built up an act, playing 12

different instruments.

He joined E.N.S.A. and entertained the troops at Scapa Flow with Jack Radcliffe, Bob and Alf Pearson and others. Later he joined the White Heather Club, and the Black and White Minstrel show, and travelled all over the world with them.

He will be much missed by his friends in Edinburgh, and his colleagues and fellow artistes in the theatrical profession. (Jean Bell)