

Blackboards no more

The official contractor's completion date for all the improvements to Drummond Community High is still April next year—although some school staff think next August is more realistic. **Spurtle** had a conducted tour shortly after the new term began.

The floor of the main hall has been raised to normal ground floor level, to form a 'concourse area' for students—but it and the new dining area won't be ready for use until around Christmas. Music, business studies and computing, and social subjects have already moved into their new rooms; the librarian is busy unpacking in her new situation on the ground floor; and the new Admin offices and Heide's room are already functional. The general impression is one of much more attractive workspaces with new carpeting, better lighting, a new heating system (there's a winter to test that, before final handover from the contractor)—and not a blackboard in sight, all whiteboards now! And brand new students' toilets. Major ongoing work includes areas for Maths and

English, and the new PE block – its steel skeleton now in place.

On the down side, it seems that the contract between the City Council and the private company responsible for the work stipulates only very limited landscaping around the school. However, Head Teacher Muriel Buchanan is investigating alternative sources of funding: maybe there's a role for other organisations in the local community to help in this.

It's a pity the improvement of our high school was tackled under the now discredited Tory/New Labour Private Finance Initiative (PFI). But looking to the future, we hope that the new facilities will provide for many years of rewarding use and enjoyment by staff, students and all community users.

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Contacts

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Broughton Village Association

Stephanie Harvey 557 2762 (daytime)

Gayfield Association

William McNair 556 4493

McDonald Area Amenity Society

Bob Stewart 557 1267

Redbraes Residents Association

George Hosey 467 6151

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Broughton History Society

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556 2651

Cllr Trevor Davies

Broughton Ward 529 3221
 Surgery at Broughton Primary School,
 Weds. 6.30pm-7pm during school terms

Cllr David Guest

New Town Ward
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 Surgery at 67 Northumberland Street
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Malcolm Chisholm MSP

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Mark Lazarowicz, MP

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BROUGHTON Spurtle

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REDBRAES

Self-help spirit yields dividends



Dave Thomson (right) and George Hosey at the Community Workshop – they cut out the lettering from scrap plastic

As recently as March this year it was a dilapidated eyesore, long unused. Now the old pavilion in Redbraes Park is well on the way to becoming 'Redbraes Community Workshop'.

The City Council owns the building, but agreed to let Redbraes Residents' Association see what they could make of it. One room and a suite of toilets

have already been completely redecorated and equipped. Now they're working on the kitchen. After that there's a second set of toilets to tackle, along with another room – which faces out towards the play area, and will be ideal for young families.

Plans for activities include information sessions, a drop-in centre

for adults in the mornings, a playgroup in the afternoons, and in the evenings a quiet place for youngsters studying for exams.

Dave Thomson, who chairs the Association, and secretary George Hosey have taken the lead in the DIY. They told **Spurtle** their motto has been "go ahead and do it yourself" – and then look for help when you really need it. They've become expert in raiding skips; and local businesses have donated redundant materials. When a bit of cash was needed they organised a Fun Day in the park: it was a rainy Sunday, but local residents turned out just the same, and £200 was raised.

While their progress is obviously based firmly on self help, they appreciate support for their efforts from beyond Redbraes: they mentioned Bill Wilson of the Council's parks department, local councillor Trevor Davies – and his secretary Joanna in particular! They're looking for a TV and a computer: maybe there are **Spurtle** readers who could help? If so, let us know – or contact George direct, on 467 6151.

EUROPCAR, EAST LONDON STREET

MP slams "anti-social behaviour"

In our July edition we reported Supt Grieve of Gayfield Police Station telling **Spurtle** that the frontage of Europcar's premises in East London Street was in private ownership, so that "parking is quite lawful – albeit inconsiderate". The way past Europcar is once again frequently completely blocked – presumably because they

now feel safe from legal challenge. Amongst those infuriated by this is local MP Mark Lazarowicz, who has now written to the chief executive of Europcar (UK), Watford "to complain about the anti-social behaviour displayed by your rental office in central Edinburgh, at East London Street in my constituency... many

parents and children are forced to cross the road at a dangerous point to the east of your company's premises, rather than making use of a school patrol provided by the local City Council immediately opposite the neighbouring primary school...

"The present behaviour displays
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MP slams "anti-social behaviour"

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a total lack of civic responsibility on the part of your company, and I demand that it stops immediately." We asked local

councillor Trevor Davies if there was any possibility of a public footway being established when Europcar leave in December this year and someone else applies for planning permission to develop the site. He has now got back to us, with a quote from a City Council official:

"I confirm that I am aware of a long running problem at Europcar on East London Street where cars are often seen to be parked on the footway. Our development control section have already been involved in initial discussions with possible developers. I anticipate that once a planning application is received that the problems experienced at the existing footway will be resolved."

FORMER BUS DEPOT AT SHRUB PLACE

Wimpey's revised plan rejected

At a meeting on 14th August councillors firmly rejected Wimpey's revised proposals for 314 flats on the site of the former LRT bus depot.

This in spite of the City Council's senior planning official describing Wimpey's revised plan as a good representative of contemporary design, and recommending acceptance. Councillors agreed with local residents that the proposed new buildings would be too high in relation to existing neighbouring buildings, that the overall design was unattractive and that with only 17 out of 314 houses having three bedrooms the development would not cater for families with children.

Broughton councillor Trevor Davies was one of those who voted for outright rejection. "We need to be a high-density, compact city - it's the way in which Edinburgh will keep its

unique character. But schemes have got to be well-designed and fit in well with the local environment. Other cities and other countries can build high density housing to good design where all kinds of people can enjoy living - I want developers to realise that they have to achieve the same standards here. If they don't bring us plans which do that, then they are likely to be turned down. If they bring us high-quality designs using the best architects, that actually contribute to the neighbourhoods around them - then we'll do our best to speed them on their way."

Pilrig Residents Association, which has spearheaded the ongoing campaign about the future of this prime site, also accentuated the positive: "We welcome the decision to mandate the Planning Department to draw up a master plan for the site in collaboration with the local community".

CLAREMONT COURT Residents go official

The people of Claremont Court (off East Claremont Street) meet on 10th September to formally constitute their Residents Association.

Spearheaded by activists Irene Fekete, Sharon Allan and Hazel Quinn, residents were roused to action after years of frustration over major faults plaguing their houses - condensation, harling cracking, and chunks of concrete falling off. The root of the problem seemed to be that 50% of them were tenants, 50% owner occupiers: the City Council didn't seem to be able to figure out who was responsible for what when it came to the costs of repairs.

Things began to take a turn for the better after some persistent lobbying of former local councillor Mark Lazarowicz. Residents' first real struggle with the Council was over rubbish collection - there were only two Saracen bins for 63 households, emptied twice a week: now they're emptied every day; and Irene Fekete says the binmen are excellent, she'd "give them five stars". And now the Council has worked out a formula for dividing costs amongst all residents, money has been found, and refurbishment of the buildings is well under way.

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McDONALD ROAD PUBLIC LIBRARY A library for the 21st century



The public library in McDonald Road in 1904, the year it opened

A notable local landmark is soon to be extensively upgraded, fit for its 21st-century rôle as McDonald Road Community Library. The complete refurbishment will improve the entire layout and ensure that all parts of the building will be fully accessible, with automatic entry doors, lift access to all floors and the installation of toilet and baby-changing facilities.

In 1999 the City Council allocated over £0.7m for the substantial development that would be needed. Now that the maintenance to the fabric has been completed, the real improvement work will start during autumn 2002 and will last about nine months. The building will have to be closed: the library service will operate just round the corner, in a trailer in the car park of Social Work HQ, Shrubhill House, Leith Walk.

When the doors reopen, the ground floor area will have been expanded, creating a one-level approach for all services, including the Ethnic Library Resources currently on the first floor. Moveable partitioning will allow flexibility of use. The range of stock will be improved, and will include

CDs and audio books, with a 'Self-Issue' service for public use. There will be a Learning Centre, free access to PCs and the internet, and a new fully equipped community hall at ground level - with additional community space on the first floor. Greater integration will allow staff to improve service quality - and longer opening hours are a possibility.

The Library is keen to enhance its central place in the community. During September plans will be on public display at McDonald Road, and local people are encouraged to complete the questionnaire (also available at the Library) on what facilities they would like to see included.

Spurtle team for this issue:

Norma McKendrick, Ken McKay, Gavin MacGregor, John Dickie, Alan McIntosh, 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
PHONE and FAX :- 556 7727

BROUGHTON Spurtle is now on the World Wide Web on www.tpuntis.demon.co.uk

BRIEFLY

Broughton History Society has its first meeting of the new session on **Monday, 23rd September** - 7.15 for 7.30pm at Drummond Community High School. Local researcher Alan McIntosh will give a talk on Warriston Cemetery.

The inaugural meeting for the Friends of Hopetoun Crescent Park takes place on Thursday, 26th September, 7.30pm in Annandale Street Mosque. If you don't think you're on the mailing list but would like more information and a copy of the proposed constitution, phone Eileen Dickie on 556 0903.

Last month we made two suggestions for the **Mansfield Traquair Centre**: benches for folk in the local community to relax on, and a local affairs bulletin board somewhere in the street-level area. One local of East Claremont Street has written in with another suggestion: "Perhaps a small interpretative plaque could also be raised, to explain the history of the building, the treasures it contains, and the involvement of those who have overseen the restoration".

The new traffic calming in East London Street is very welcome. But how about some greenery to break up all that asphalt? The kind of planting done on the pavement extension at the corner of Bellevue Place with the main road surely can't be very expensive?

Communal wheelie-bins will start arriving in Broughton on 7th October - 233 in the first phase, so it may take over a week to complete delivery. Streets within the World Heritage Site are excluded meanwhile: but Council staff are looking at Forth Street and Hart Street with a view to running a trial in the very near future.

Festival? What festival? Alastair Shaw of Woodcraft Supplies tells us that business has been far from booming in Broughton Street over the past few weeks. We lost two big Fringe venues, Café Graffiti and the Palladium, a couple of years ago; and this year Drummond Community High has been out of action because of all the building work. There just hasn't been the Festival buzz of previous years.