

# Spurtle AGM 2014-2015 held 11th March 2015 in Broughton St Mary's

**Present:** Marion Donaldson (Leith Central Community Council), Rhys Fullerton (Bellevue Road), Margery and Bill Giles (Drummond Place), Maria Hart (The Glebe, Pilrig Street, *Spurtle* Treasurer), David Hill (Broughton Street), Richard Love (Bellevue Place; Broughton History Society), Alan McIntosh (East Claremont Street; *Spurtle* Chair), Mike Orr (Barony Street), Duncan Osler (Learmonth Terrace), Hal Osler (Stockbridge and Inverleith Community Council), Caroline Roussot (Cumberland Street), David Sterratt (McDonald Road, *Spurtle* Secretary), Ella Taylor-Smith (Bellevue Road, *Spurtle* Minister without Portfolio)

## 1 Minutes of 2014 AGM

We approved the minutes of our last AGM, held on 10th February 2014. Proposed Ella, seconded Maria.

## 2 Accounts for 2014

Maria presented our accounts for 2014 (attached), which have been audited by John Phillips of Central Edinburgh Quaker Meeting. We have made a surplus again, which we will distribute to local charities and voluntary groups within or close to the Spurtle's distribution area. The printing costs have gone up due to our increasing print run, which has been rising due to demand.

We thank Maria for her very clear and colourful presentation.

## 3 Chair's report

Alan reported on the year 2014-2015, as summarised below.

### Paper edition

- This year the January issue has been a welcome break, and reports from shopkeepers about people asking for the missing edition have indicated how popular *Spurtle* is.
- We now print 2,400 copies per month, distributed throughout the Spurtleshire area. This is a substantial increase on the 1,700 copies produced at this time last year.
- We still have 30–40 contributors per month. Regulars include: Alan McIntosh, David Hill, Caroline Roussot, John Ross MacLean, Rhys Fullerton, Left-Handed Tea Drinker, Fred Street, Ella Taylor-Smith, David Sterratt, David Jackson Young and the incendiary John Ross. Tim Smith does proof/copyediting, and Maria Hart does the layout.
- There are probably 200 stories in the paper which haven't appeared online.
- This paper now distributed by a team of 5, soon to be 6.

### Online presence

- Since the last AGM (10th February 2014) until today (11th March 2015) we have published 449 stories on the website, along with 39 letters.

- The average number unique users per month is 7,360 (up approximately 3,000 on last year). In our weakest month (March 2014), we had 4,929 unique visitors and 12,261 visits, with each visitor returning 2.5 times on average. In our strongest month, December 2014, we had 16,012 unique visitors who made a total of 26,706 visits, about 1.7 times per unique visitor.
- Social media
  - Twitter followers have gone up from 1,970 in February 2014 to 2,742 today.
  - Facebook likes gone up from 400 in February 2014 to 651 today.
  - Ally Tibbitt’s research in January showed that over the previous year, *Spurtle* is most influential in terms of Edinburgh’s 12 not-for-profit news sites, thanks to Facebook. 36% of stories shared originated here.

### Stories and trends

- The potential new competitor, the *New Town Gazette* doesn’t really affect us and I can’t see it lasting; it will probably go same the way as *New Town Matters*.
- *Spurtle* is integral to outreach by community councils and other local groups.
- *Spurtle* has led Edinburgh news agenda, with the *Evening News*, *Scotsman* and STV following our lead on a number of big stories (usually without acknowledgement). These include:
  - Leith Walk improvements
  - Supermarket spread
  - The future of St Stephen’s Church and its bell
  - George St by Caroline Roussot in December, our biggest story, which melted our website.
  - St Andrew Square
  - St James Quarter/Picardy Place
  - Referendum coverage (impartial, no brickbats)
  - The old Royal High School

### What we have achieved

- We stopped Tesco and Batley’s extending disruptive hours.
- We stopped the *Evening News* taking adverts for brothels.
- We kick-started a civic space manifesto, which may perhaps lead to toning-down use of St Andrew Sq.

### Other highlights

- Our second Autumn social was very enjoyable and certainly much better organised since I had nothing to do with it.

### Looking forward

- General Election Hustings - may need help.
- Next big story will be future of Register House once Government moves out.

- The St James Centre rebuilding
- Autumn social
- Spring social, possibly in a pub; or perhaps a monthly pub meeting.
- More Left-handed tea drinker.

#### **What are we not doing?**

- Our coverage for young people & students is pretty poor.
- Our archive on Spurtle website not complete - Richard Love has them and we would like to scan them this year.
- I would like to see advertising managed better than I have been; are there any offers?
- Guest editors to commission additional pieces for a month?

#### **Questions to the chair**

- **Hal Osler (Stockbridge and Inverleith Community Council):** What is the area covered by Broughton Spurtle?
- **AM:** We traditionally worked to the middle of Broughton St. We have extended westwards to Howe St in search of advertising.
- **HO:** We were unhappy about the coverage of St Stephens. However, we would be very pleased to have more coverage from the Spurtle.
- **AM:** We would be pleased to have more stories; please send them as soon as you know about them.
- **Richard Love (Broughton History Society):** The History Society's boundaries are similar to Spurtle's, but obviously issues that affect the surroundings affect the Broughton area.
- There was a discussion about the ins-and-outs of Stockbridge bells.

## **4 Website report**

David Sterratt (web technician) reported that there have been a few tweaks to the design of the website, principally putting news stories and latest tweets on the front page. In response to the December meltdown, the settings for the website have been altered to make it perform better under heavy load.

## **5 Plans for 2015**

- See above.

## 6 Appointment of officers

- Alan McIntosh was appointed Chair, nominated by Maria Hart, seconded by Richard Love
- Maria Hart was appointed Treasurer, nominated by Alan McIntosh, seconded by Ella Taylor-Smith
- David Sterratt was appointed Secretary, nominated by Alan McIntosh, seconded by Maria Hart
- Ella Taylor-Smith was appointed Minister without Portfolio, nominated by Alan McIntosh, seconded by David Sterratt
- Rhys Fullerton was proposed by Alan McIntosh as Minister without Portfolio, seconded by Maria Hart