

Spurtle



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BROUGHTON'S INDEPENDENT STIRRER Free

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2024**

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FIGHTBACK BEGINS AGAINST STUDENT HOUSING

Leith Central Community Council considered a discussion paper about purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) at its Nov meeting.

The paper outlines 3 key concerns:

- Negative impact of PBSA on local housing availability for developers and Leith residents alike.
- Incompatibility of expanding PBSA and the Council's housing policies.
- Contradiction between universities' duty, as charitable bodies, not to harm their host communities and the deleterious effect of their actions leading to concentrated student numbers far from the institutions they attend.

LCCC now plans to develop a coordinated and unified strategy with other community councils, housing providers and advocacy groups (e.g. Living Rent) to oppose future PBSA projects and promote residential developments.

It will identify PBSA conflicts with Council policy and draft a clear position statement. It may also file a formal complaint with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) about universities' alleged misuse of charitable resources.

It was further suggested at Nov's meeting that LCCC should contact student politicians (some of whom are unhappy at the expense and proliferation of PBSA) with a view to future cooperation.

Ward 12's Cllr James Dalgleish (who is the Council's Planning Convener) told the meeting that some aspects of the newly adopted City Plan 2030 would help curb PBSA. For example, a 10% cap on the number of studio flats per development, and preserving the 'established character' of an area.

Sceptics responded by criticising the vague (and occasionally unintelligible) wording of guidelines. They also called for cast-iron design stipulations that new PBSA should be built to a standard which could be converted for other uses later.

Spurtle welcomes the LCCC initiative. Opposition to PBSA developments in recent years has been piecemeal across the city, isolated and easily overwhelmed by the better resourced combinations of university strategists and profit-driven developers. Informed, targeted and coordinated resistance offers the hope of better balanced communities and more chances for residents to live permanently and affordably in the city of their choice.

BAD PARKING? KEEP IT TO YOURSELF

In a self-congratulatory assessment in Oct, a report to the Transport & Environment Cmte asserted that the Council's online reporting form for bad parking (on yellow lines, bus stops, footways, tramlines etc.) had been well used by the public.

But its assertion that 'all reported locations are visited, and enforcement action is carried out (where appropriate)' failed to capture customers' lived experience of parking attendants not turning up until days later, by which time the inconsiderate or downright dangerous parkers have long gone. Elm Row, for example, is a complete free-for-all.

Leith Central Community Council's Harald Tobermann wrote to the senior official concerned, pointing out that 'such delayed and ultimately ineffective responses are likely to discourage future use of the online form'.

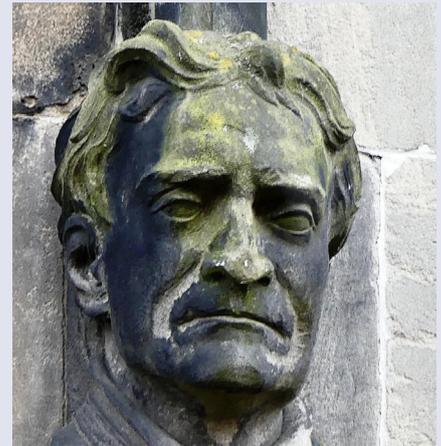
A Council complaints officer replied 6 days later saying, 'our enforcement contractors will respond as quickly as resources allow, however, I'm sure you can appreciate that this may not always be immediate.'

'We ask that members of the public refrain from sending us multiple requests about the same vehicle/location.'

And there you have it: the authentic sound of bureaucratic ostriches burying their heads in the sand.



THE BONNINGTON BUST MYSTERY – WE THINK WE'VE CRACKED IT



It's been bothering us since Feb 2018. On the Bonnington Rd elevation of Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce (formerly Bonnington Primary School) are two stone reliefs. We spotted Sir Walter Scott's face straight away, but who was the other, shown above? Readers' theories have included Thomas Carlyle (but he was more beardy) and James Balfour, 4th Laird of Pilrig (not him either – he looked like a boiled egg). Who then? Now turn to page 3.

DRUG PROBLEMS IN BROUGHTON

Since June this year various reports reaching the *Spurtle* have alleged increased public drug dealing, drug use and related anti-social behaviour in parts of Broughton.

Hotspots include Heriot Hill Ter, Bellevue Rd and Rodney St. All three are of particular concern given their proximity to Drummond CHS or the routes pupils use at lunchtime.

Ways into the school grounds have been locked in the evenings and at weekends, apparently in response. While boys and young men are climbing over to play football and basketball as usual, some girls and young women prefer not to. 'Locking the gates has had a gendered effect on use of the playground,' one local informs us.

Police are aware that strangers have been loitering on common stairs across the area, and at least one car has been broken into and used as a sheltered space to shoot up. We're aware of three local businesses which have been troubled by individuals who are clearly not well.

If you live or work in Broughton and have recently experienced issues of this sort, we'd like to hear about it in order to accurately assess the scale of the problem. You can of course report problems directly to the police, or anonymously to Crimestoppers on Tel. 0800 555 111

Briefly



Mind-bending signage designed to alter public behaviour for the better has now been installed by the Council on bins around **Picardy Pl** (see Issue 345). Not only does it gently nudge passers-by into **disposing thoughtfully of their chewing gum** but, by artful positioning, it suggests where to put dog-ends too.

Exciting media development:—A new plastic distribution box containing *Spurtles* has blossomed on railings at the corner of **Dundas and Northumberland Sts**. Please form an orderly queue.

In Sept, **St Mary's Catholic Cathedral** applied for permission to fell a Himalayan birch on ground adjacent to **Little King St** to make way for the erection of a new statue ('**Jesus the Homeless**', Issue 342). The Council has refused consent for this, saying removal of the tree is unnecessary (24/04694/TCO). It described the tree as '**the most prominent specimen in a significant tree group in a dense urban area with very low canopy cover**'; a consideration which didn't stop the removal of trees from the top of Broughton St in order to facilitate creation of the Picardy Pl gyratory.

Community councils will dissolve like sweeteners in a cup of warm local-government Bovril at the start of Feb 2025. Nominations for those **wanting to stand** as community councillors should be submitted by 27 Feb. Where demand for membership exceeds available spaces, **elections will be held on 27 Mar**. Why might you want to join? To be an active citizen. To set one foot on the first rung of democracy. **To have your say and represent other locals** on licensing, planning, roads/traffic, community safety and green spaces. To find out more about **Leith Central Community Council**, visit [bit.ly/4uLCCC]. For the **New Town & Broughton CC**, see the item on our website from 1 Dec. For **Stockbridge & Inverleith CC**, prepare to be underwhelmed at [bit.ly/4uSICC].

On 6 Nov, **London Rd** reopened to traffic turning left from Leith Walk. Hopefully this will reduce traffic congestion around Picardy Pl. Plans to respect a desire line across grass at the end of **Elm Row** are expected to be realised soon. If only pedestrian desire lines across carriageways were similarly prioritised, what a different city we would live in.

The **Friends of Inverleith Pk** have launched a lottery to raise funds. Tickets cost £1 per week with a **maximum jackpot of £25k**. For details visit [bit.ly/parklottery].

New to the neighbourhood, the 103 Dental and Implant Practice will open at **103 E London St** in early 2025. It's already accepting NHS and private patients. We trust the new service will slot in just fine. Tel. 0131 608 3219.

Boutique hotel for Broughton

Top Property Edinburgh Ltd aims to convert offices in the A-listed Georgian townhouse at 29 Albany St into a 20-room (45-guest) boutique hotel (24/05516/FUL). Built in the early years of the 19th century, it is in poor condition at the moment and suffers from damp.

Staran Architects have been appointed to restore and refurbish the building inside and out, and to vastly improve its energy efficiency. Proposals would also create guestrooms on 2 levels in a brick-built extension to the rear (currently used as a print workshop and of no architectural interest) and make use of basement rooms in the mews at 7 Dublin St Lane S.

An acoustic report accompanying the application makes clear that, while potential guests in the hotel would be able to 'enjoy the ambience of the New Town', they would not be able to hear too much of it or inflict some of their own on neighbours. *For previous occupants at No. 29 (and other Albany St addresses), visit Barclay Price's website at [bit.ly/29ASBP].*



New vision for old home

Chetty & Das Optometrists, part of the Concept Eye Clinic Group, want to move from their current Stockbridge premises and change the A-listed 5-bdrm dwelling down the road at 42 Raeburn Pl (bang opposite the British Heart Foundation) into a specialist private clinic and 'much-needed community hub' (24/05522/FUL). No external alterations are proposed.

One side of the proposal would focus on sight, including myopia control for children. The other would host 'an educational, environmental, creative and artistic series of events for patients and local residents/service users alike'. It would include retail space and an art gallery with the capacity to host charitable fund-raising events.

CECG sees the proposal as a 'natural intersection between physical and emotional wellbeing initiatives'. It would be a 'lived, sustainable, and revitalising experience for local people to enjoy'. Some others, who refuse to look on the bright side, view the plans as a further erosion of Stockbridge's original residential character. There have been 12 objections so far.



Image: Wellcome V0009409.JPG.

Mixed news from Pilrig Park

A group called Leith Runs Together has secured Council consent to organise regular runs for juniors in Pilrig Pk. If any reader knows about the idea and those behind it, we'd love to hear more. We understand money to make the dream a reality will be sought at the next round of Leith Chooses participatory funding.

Meanwhile, there are differing views on the level of drug dealing and use in the Park at present. Optimists say there's been a notable decrease following drastic clearance of bosky undergrowth. Pessimists say that in cold weather there are fewer people in the Park to notice what's really going on.

Those with happy heads on applaud the Council's recent replacement of wood chips with rubber matting around play equipment here. Those with hearts permanently smelling of bad breath and blocked drains note that the wooden picnic tables have been spoiled by vandals.

In cheerier news all round, pupils from Lorne, Pilrig Park and Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce primary schools are about to plant bulbs here in readiness for the spring.



Quiet thoughts on calm in the capital

Spurtle contributor, writer and researcher Charlie Ellis features in a new episode of Angela Casey's regular *Edinburgh Outdoors* podcast about the capital's green spaces and the people in them [bit.ly/EHOutCellis].

Ellis focuses on railway paths, particularly those North Edinburgh ones around St Mark's Pk. With late autumn birdsong in the background, he recounts the beneficial personal effects of escaping over-tourism for exercise, foliage, wild garlic, blackcurrants and changing seasons. And the delights of urban quiet and intimacy as an alternative to more obvious wilderness escapes.

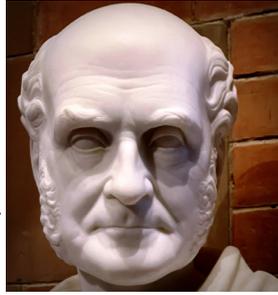
It's a short, peaceful and thought-provoking interlude with tips also for quiet excursions elsewhere in the city.



Lad o' pairs a fine example

We think we know him. The bust shown here appears in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. It was sculpted by John Hutchison in 1861 (16 years before Bonnington PS opened) and depicts the co-founder and first editor of the *Scotsman* Charles Maclaren (1782–1866).

An East Lothian farmer's son, he edited the paper for 27 years, was a courageous Liberal advocate of political reform and worked on various editions of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* before editing the sixth. He was a talented and well-travelled antiquarian, and for the last 2 years of his life served as President of the Edinburgh Geological Society. As such, he exemplified an attractive combination of unwavering principle, commercial probity, wide learning and public service for the edification of pupils and parents alike.



We think the Bun-sgoil Taobh na Pàirce bust shows a determined Maclaren in vigorous middle age with a full thatch. Do readers agree?—AM

Flawed service fails Edinburgh streets

E Claremont St resident Shane Carter spoke at the Transport & Environment Cmte last month in support of a petition signed by 77 fellow locals.

He expressed frustration at the state of roads, litter, weeds, broken paving stones and detritus in Bellevue and Broughton St. He called for revisions of Council practice to improve the situation.

Carter, a London School of Economics Social Policy graduate, says street-cleanliness standards across Edinburgh fall far below those of Dundee, Perth and Vienna.

He thinks Keep Scotland Beautiful's 'risible' independent auditing of Edinburgh's street-cleaning service lacks 'internal validity'.

He alleges expensive agency staff take insufficient pride in their work and are not held individually responsible for performance. Clean-up of spillages is patchy. Occasional 'lick-and-a-promise' targeting of problems does not address systemic failures.

Carter's specific but unfettered style, and his informal use of the microphone, both engaged and disconcerted sympathetic committee members. He departed with a sudden flourish. You can enjoy it all at [bit.ly/stmessy].

Officials will now respond to Mr Carter's concerns in a report at Dec's T&E meeting. Until then, he continues to call out examples of poor practice.



Christmas

THE PRACTICE OF DRINKING 'TO YOUR GOOD HEALTH' is one alike honoured by good feeling, conviviality, and kindness. True it is that, in some cases, the friend who drinks to your good health may think no more about it; but wherever a man's health is proposed in the 'loving cup,' it ought to induce some reflection in the individual to whom the compliment is paid, as to whether he has himself endeavoured to preserve the invaluable boon.

A 'merry Christmas' is too often marred by unwise indulgences, and Epicurean sacrifices. 'Keeping it up' is very pleasant at the time, but it 'hardly pays' in the long run. Headaches, Indigestion, Gout, and Prostration, are in themselves exceedingly disagreeable, but Indigestion leads to a frightful train of maladies. In short, it is difficult to pass over Christmas time safely and comfortably without the aid of

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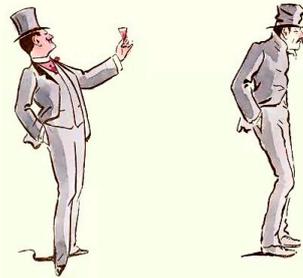
*** Ask for Parr's Life Pills.

AGENTS.

Edinburgh—Raimes & Co., Leith Walk.

Glasgow—Apothecaries' Company, Virginia Street

[From the Scotsman, 22 December 1855. Raimes & Co. was based at 10 Smith's Place from the 1830s onward. It purchased the Elm Row Lindsay & Gilmour pharmacy in the 1970s and adopted that name for its pharmacies after 1988.]



Such pleasures quickly pass away.

THE EVENING RED.

THE MORNING GRAY.

Briefly



Pictured here is **Anash Singh**, arriving in style for his recent wedding to Chandri at the **Sheriff Brae Gudwara** in Leith. Anash, known to customers as Tommy, has **not often, if ever**, been seen on horseback before. We are relieved to report that he is now safely back in the saddle at **Claremont Food & Wine**.

The Council has approved Edinburgh Street Food's **retrospective application** to install 5 food-wagons and kiosks on land next to the **OMNi Centre** (24/03724/FUL). It says the proposal is 'acceptable in terms of scale, form and design with regards to its impact on the conservation area'.

The first issue of hyperlocal **Montgomery Parklife** was published at the start of Dec, a little later than anticipated. The **8-page quarterly** is feature-led and will be distributed through local shops. We wish it well.

As **Drummond CHS** approaches its 100th birthday next year, staff are again calling for former students to join an **alumni network** offering advice and inspiration to today's young people there. Contact [bit.ly/oldDCHS].

Local observers declare themselves confused at why an application by the owners of **294 Leith Walk** to extend their trading hours to sell liquor (Fr–Sun) until 2am was approved by the Planning Dept not the Licensing Board. In fact, the Sama restaurant had quite rightly applied to the Planning Dept for an S42 agreement to vary the conditions of a previous planning consent and had not sought or been granted a *licence extension* by so doing.

With **Edinburgh's City Plan 2030** now ratified and adopted, work has begun on drafting **Edinburgh's City Plan 2040**.

The gym space behind Edinburgh Academy on **Henderson Row** is 'unfit for purpose'. Until it can be converted into Design Technology classrooms, the school will continue to make **temporary use** of ground-floor and upper-floor modular classroom facilities (Portakabin) for up to another 3 years.

Edinburgh Council has refused an appeal to help cash-strapped community councils improve efficiency and save money by providing **dedicated email systems**. CEC's Digital Services Management Team cited the constantly evolving '**cyber security threat landscape**' and said that granting community councils access to their corporate networks would introduce 'inherent risks that could compromise [CEC's] cybersecurity posture and **potentially lead to data breaches** or other significant security incidents'.

Details of the revised **No. 13 bus service**, operational from 2 Dec, are available at [bit.ly/13bus].

Moreover ...

The **Mansfield PI** bus shelter which disappeared without warning on 2 Sept reappeared without fanfare on 20 Nov. We were **glad to see its return** and hope it proves less troubled by wind than its predecessor (Issue 344). The reinstatement of refurbished benches at **Bellevue PI and Ter** is now overdue or still 6 months away, depending on which official you talk to.

In a recent *Scotsman* article (25.9.24), Rachel Amery usefully explained that **Edinburgh Trams' losses** of £10.3m last year are largely accounted for by the Council's annual asset fee of £8.5m. Levied since 2018, this sum reflects the Council's **additional borrowing costs** due to the first section of line (Airport-York PI) coming in £400m over budget and 3 years late. Passenger numbers have jumped by over 92% since the extension from **Broughton to Newhaven** began operating in June 2023, so a profitable service may soon be achieved.

Contrary to some expectations, the Firework Control Zone adopted for **Calton Hill** between 1 and 10 Nov was effective. Council officials restricted road access, and an excessive number of uncontrolled, dangerous and **ear-splitting explosions** was avoided as a result. Unruly pro-prototechnic gangs of hoodies from **Regent, Royal and Carlton Terraces** and associated **mews** either stayed at home or assembled elsewhere to protest against the change. The **Calton Hill Conservation Trust** had earlier consulted widely with stakeholders nearby and further afield before arguing in favour of the FCZ.



After 24 years running the **Canonmills Newsagents**, husband-and-wife team Anwar and Ruby retired on 30 Nov. 'This milestone is both exciting and bitter-sweet, as we will deeply miss the friendships and connections we've formed with so many.' The couple now plan to relax, holiday together in Pakistan, and see more of their young grandson in England. **Abubakar and Usama (Sam) Siddique** will take on and extend the shop's popular combination of convenience products, wide-ranging magazines and newspaper deliveries.

This is the **last Spurtle of 2024** and the first of 2025. News updates and features will continue to appear on our website (URL on p. 1) until the appearance of the **next printed issue in Feb**. We wish all our readers, advertisers, contributors, distributors, and lawyer acquaintances with the good sense not to pursue others' grudges a **Very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year**.

Spurtle Team: E. Brown, 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

Will you take a leading role in local democracy?

Are you interested in representing locals' views to City of Edinburgh Council, other public bodies and private agencies in this area?

LCCC seeks local people to take key roles as Vice-Chair and Engagement Officer. Guidance on offer from experienced members. **Next meeting at 7pm on 16 Dec in McDonald Road Library.**

<https://leithcentralcc.co.uk>

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