

INVERLEITH NEWS

INVERLEITH NEWS Issue 26
Spring 2007

AGM NOTICE, 26 MARCH 2007

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THE INVERLEITH SOCIETY

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the area in which we live and work

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Report on the Year

Re-scheduling of Inverleith News and Annual General Meeting

A few of you might have noticed the omission of the usual Inverleith News in September 2006, and more of you will have been surprised by its appearance now in March 2007. Some of you will remember that we decided to reprogramme the Inverleith Society's calendar by rescheduling the production of the Inverleith News and the Annual General Meeting from their traditional dates of September and November. This change will avoid the hectic period gathering copy and editing the magazine during August, when, just like the rest of Edinburgh, your Committee is either hosting friends and relations who descend for the Festival, or escaping the m el e altogether. The next AGM will now be held on Monday 26 March 2007, almost eighteen months after the previous AGM in November 2005.

Community Council Boundaries

At the November 2005 AGM we raised the question of the status of the Inverleith Society in relation to Community Councils. While the Inverleith Society has continued for over thirty years as an amenity society, its presence may have inhibited the pressure for a local Community Council, resulting in Inverleith being one of the few remaining areas not represented by any Community Council. The government, through the local authorities, is now trying to rationalise Community Council boundaries so that each area is represented, and at the same time try to align them better with local government wards.

One option was for the Inverleith Society Committee to re-form as a Community Council for Inverleith, but the Committee was reluctant to do this; we are an independent amenity society rather than a grass-roots sub-

stratum of government. The Inverleith Society can continue to operate as it always has, alongside the Community Councils.

Inverleith's neighbouring Community Councils are Stockbridge, to the south-west, and Trinity to the north. The City Council's first proposal was that the Inverleith area should be split along Inverleith Row and Inverleith Place, with one part coming under the aegis of Stockbridge Community Council, and the other under Trinity Community Council. However, the Committee recommended that Inverleith should not be divided in this way, and that the whole of Inverleith should be joined with Stockbridge Community Council. The Society endorsed this recommendation at the AGM in November 2005 by a large majority, and this has now been ratified by the City Council.

The former Stockbridge Community Council is now known as the Stockbridge and Inverleith Community Council, and it should be noted that the boundaries of the northern extension are wider than those of the Inverleith Society, stretching all the way along Ferry Road from Crewe Toll to include Warriston Cemetery and Crematorium on the east. We endeavour to have at least one Inverleith Society Committee member in attendance at the monthly meetings. You can access the minutes of these meetings on www.sandicc.com if there is a burning issue to check.

Social Evening

The Society's Social Evening, held in Eildon Street in November, was well attended and most enjoyable. Remember to register for this event at the forthcoming AGM if you would like to be invited in future.

Marian McIntyre

Inverleith Planning Issues

A major application which has had an impact on Inverleith has been the Trinity Park House development, where permission for 256 flats was granted in March 2006 (demolition of the office block has begun). Some concern has been felt about the Tanfield Standard Life premises: redevelopment seemed possible at one stage, but it is now understood that they have been sold and will continue in office use. There have also been numerous applications for minor developments, such as French windows, small house extensions, conservatories, etc. One controversial proposal for a mews house development in Inverleith Terrace Lane is still awaiting a decision.

Bangholm Terrace

Permission was granted last year for 21 flats within the Heriot's playing fields, in spite of local objections to the proposal. These will be entered off Bangholm Terrace and the residents of Homescott and Homecairn regret the loss of their views of the castle and Arthur's Seat (unfortunately loss of view is not a recognized category of Planning objection). Cala Homes have no firm starting date, but it is not envisaged before the autumn.

Citadel House, 50-52 East Fettes Avenue

Once the headquarters of Salvesens, the logistics company, this vacant, low-rise, office block near the junction of Inverleith Place and East Fettes Avenue is a rather forlorn sight. In 2005 the Society responded to a proposed residential redevelopment expressing concerns of over-development. The Society felt that five four-storey blocks of flats plus 12 townhouses was too much on too small a site. There were also concerns about the use of render and flat roofs:

neither of those elements being typical of the Inverleith conservation area. At time of going to press this site remains unchanged.

7 Inverleith Row



This handsome detached house, formerly known as Arboretum House, stands at the southern side of the East Gate of the Botanic Garden. In 2004 it ceased to be a single family house. Now, after three years and a lot of hard work from a variety of European workers it has become Heritor's Residence, five upmarket flats for short term lets. As an illustration of how living patterns change; one flat has been created out of the original drawing room space and the billiard room (valued by locals as Rachael's cafe) has become the living room for another flat. In planning terms the developer was allowed considerable leeway, it would appear, in internal alterations to a listed building.

37 Inverleith Place

As we go to press this house, owned by the Art College, is for sale, and an application for Planning Permission is expected imminently. The developers are discussing their plans with

the neighbours and responding to their comments. The Committee will peruse the application when it is submitted.

Skateboard Park Proposal

Your Committee held a wide range of opinions occasioning much discussion at Committee meetings, but we were also aware that we should reflect the views of the membership, some of whom would be strongly opposed to the proposal. The Society submitted formal objections relating to planning law and concerns about maintenance and supervision. The proposal was finally rejected at a meeting of the Planning Committee on 22 November 2006.

The article on page 10 is Bernard Kuenssberg's personal view, motivated by a desire to see improved facilities for young people in the park.

Inverleith Park Masterplan

The revised proposals for the Skateboard Park included reference to an 'Inverleith Park Masterplan' of 2003, with a tiny illustration but no text or explanation. The Inverleith Society had not been consulted about this, and when we asked to see a copy we were told that it was an internal 'working document' and 'not made available for public comment'. It appears that various recent improvements were included, e.g. the changes to the west end of the pond and the reorganisation of the Rose Garden, and that these had been discussed with the 'Friends of Inverleith Park', but not with ourselves. We have written to ask that consultations be extended to include ourselves and the Stockbridge and Inverleith Community Council in future.

Inverleith Conservation Area Character Appraisal

A conservation area is defined by the Planning Act of 1997 as an 'area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'.

Inverleith, which fully meets those criteria, is one of 38 conservation areas in Edinburgh.

In order to monitor the preservation and enhancement of the conservation districts the City prepares character appraisals and periodically these need updating. In April 2006 the Society contributed detailed comments to the revision of the Inverleith character appraisal and is pleased to see that most of its comments were accepted and incorporated. In terms of preservation the residents seem to be doing a pretty good job. In terms of enhancement, however, the Society has concerns about the quality of the new building going up in Inverleith.

The full character appraisal can be found on the City's website: www.edinburgh.gov.uk/planning. It makes for more interesting reading than you might think.

RBGE West Gate Project

In November 2006 the Scottish Executive announced that it was to contribute an additional sum of money to the Royal Botanic Garden West Gate project to add to its contribution already made in June 2006. This means that the amount of money raised from organisations has now very nearly reached the required level to allow a campaign to raise funds from the public to go forward. Thus the organisers of this exciting project can feel confident that it will reach fruition. Hopefully, this time next year we shall be able to report that work will soon start on what will raise even further the status of our garden.

Alison Gordon
Pippa Leary
Marian McIntyre
Bryan Wade

Traffic and Parking

The introduction of Zone N2 residents' parking on 8 January 2007 is the culmination of over 10 years of lobbying. The Society hopes you have found the £80 permit charge worth it. That breaks down to £1.60 a week, about the same as two litres of petrol which would take you about 20 miles. Seen in the context of motoring costs it seems a bargain. If you are reading this you have probably also read earlier articles chronicling the Society's efforts to get some relief from commuter congestion. The photographs should help tell the story.

Most graphic is Inverleith Place: the eastern half with space for residents and very low take-up of pay and display bays and the western half, currently unregulated, with both sides of the road lined with cars. Much the same applies in Inverleith Terrace and Eildon Street: room for residents and low take-up of paid parking. The same low take-up is seen at the



Eildon Street

West Gate of the Botanic Garden on Arboretum Place. Whether this low take-up is temporary or will persist when zone N3 comes into operation in July 2007 remains to be seen.

The photographs also illustrate the multiplicity of options, instructions, obligations and exhortations which now regulate parking in Inverleith. Depending where you have parked, what you pay, and whether you have a permit (resident's or visitor's), you can park safely for 2, 4, 6, 9 or 24 hours. So check carefully before you wander off. Although the situation is confusing, it is an attempt by the city to respond to different needs. Short term parking should suit shoppers, while longer, 9 hour bays are for workers in the area.

Rush-hour parking restrictions have been lifted on the east side of Howard Place/Inverleith Row, which makes life much easier for residents. That's the good news. A less positive outcome is the day-long clearing of the west side of Inverleith Row, encouraging speeding and thoughtless driving, inappropriate for a residential road. Another drawback, an influx of commuter cars, is affecting residents of Inverleith Place west end, Arboretum Road and - temporarily - streets scheduled to be included in the extension of N2 at the north end of Inverleith Row later this summer.



Inverleith Place, West & East



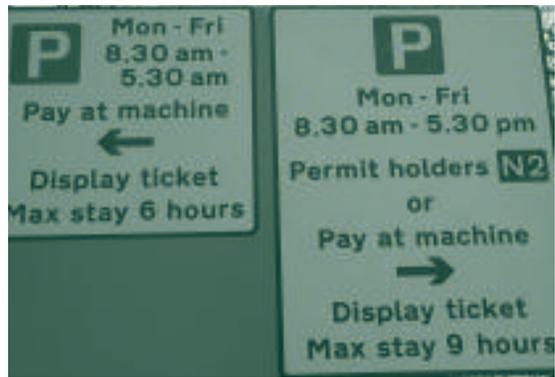
West Gate, Botanic Garden



Howard Place/Inverleith Row

The introduction of a short length of bus lane at the north end of Inverleith Row has added to congestion. Does 200-300 metres of bus lane achieve better traffic flow for buses? I remain to be convinced. The intersection changes have reduced the amount of parking space available for shoppers, thereby affecting our traders. Traders in the south of the city have proposed free short-term parking bays for shoppers. The Society feels that idea has merit. Goldenacre is a valued shopping area, and measures to assist

Comely Bank Avenue, as opposed to spreading it out so that some of it uses Glenogle Road/St Bernard's Row and then Dean Street. One would hope from the fiasco of city centre closures that the City would realise that closing streets does not reduce traffic but merely re-directs it. Where is the fairness in giving one set of residents cleared streets at the expense of piling up traffic on the streets of another? The Society argued, forcefully but ineffectively, that street closures had been shown to be a blunt



small shops have our support. A related issue is the provision of permits for traders. The Society supports that idea, too.

The closure of St Bernard's Row has also had an impact in the Inverleith area. This requires longer journeys around Inverleith Park, not good for the carbon footprint, and concentrates traffic on East Fettes Avenue and

instrument in traffic management and that more subtle means - humps, cameras, chicanes - could be used. Given the City's response to the Society's observations, it seems we have a continuing remit to be the voice of reason and local knowledge.

Pippa Leary

Warriston Community Tennis Club

The derelict tennis courts on Warriston Recreation Ground are owned by the City of Edinburgh Council's Children and Families Department. Over the years various people have asked for the courts to be restored, but the Council have been unable to do so because of competing demands on the schools budget. After initial meetings with the Council, Tennis Scotland and various other people, Warriston Community Tennis Club (WCTC) was established in 2005 to raise funds to restore the courts.

The courts will also be made available free of charge to local schools at agreed time slots. The Northern Bowling Club on Warriston Crescent is willing to enter discussions about making their toilet and other facilities available. As the club is aimed at the local community, and schools can use the existing Council parking at the end of the playing fields, there are no plans for additional parking. The capital cost is approximately £115,000, and there will be ongoing maintenance costs.



The current aim is to build 3 new courts on the site of the existing 8 derelict courts, and to restore the remaining area to grass. The courts will be managed by WCTC, which will be community and family oriented, seeking to provide facilities at low cost for local residents, and to encourage beginners and those of moderate ability of all

ages. WCTC has liaised closely with Tennis Scotland, who paid for a feasibility study, and have confirmed their full support. The Council has also pledged its support, allocating £30,000 towards the project in their 2007-08 capital budget. The Council will benefit from the project through access to the courts for local schools.

We are very encouraged by the enthusiasm and support shown by the community. Over the last 6 months we have distributed flyers to local homes, put petitions in local businesses, and organised a community meeting to discuss the project. We have received expressions of support from more than 120 households, indicating that 191 adults and 125 children would use the courts. We are most grateful to the Northern Bowling Club, which has provided a venue for meetings and fundraising events free of charge.

A fundraising committee is working on raising the bulk of the funds required for the project, with applications submitted or pending to SportScotland, the Big Lottery Fund,

Foundation for Sport and Arts, and the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme. We hope to find a major sponsor but if we are unsuccessful, we will look at other options, perhaps involving a smaller number of courts and the majority of funding coming from the local community in return for more exclusive access.

If you would like to support the project, either by pledges of donations or help in kind, then either visit the tennis section of the website www.warriston.org, or email tennis@sweetfamily.demon.co.uk. If you provide your email address we can keep you updated.

Richard and Anna Sweet

Northern Bowling Club and Warriston Playing Field

At a meeting in November 2006 attended by representatives of the Northern Bowling Club, the schoolchild football users of Warriston Playing Field, relevant councillors, residents' associations and the Inverleith Society the future of the Bowling Club and the uses of the playing field were discussed.

In an effort to attract new members the Northern Bowling Club wanted to explore the possibility of joining forces with other local users to create a more modern, desirable and integrated sports facility. The representatives of local residents groups were in favour of:

- continued recreational use, with no reduction in number of pitches,
- the development of a facility which supported all the sports needs of the users (bowlers, footballers, tennis players),

- removal of obsolete buildings (2 pavilions and flat roofed store) which would become attractive nuisances if no longer needed.

An appropriate site for a new building might be on the north end of the existing run-down tennis courts site. This location could be suitable because: a) would not encroach on existing pitches, b) central to sports activities, and c) distant from housing, so the impact of noise and light generated would be minimised.

The upshot was that Councillor Anderson proposed to instruct the writing of a brief for a feasibility study which would be submitted to the assembled group for review. At the time of going to press it was possible only to determine that the feasibility study preparation was underway.

Pippa Leary

Lament for a Skatepark

A skateboard facility for Inverleith Park was first mooted by Edinburgh Council in 2004. Some £500,000 had been ring-fenced for a first-class sports arena for this popular activity, now an Olympic sport and 'the second most popular sport in the Scout Movement'. It was the first time that new money had been found for any sporting facility for young people in Inverleith Park - new or otherwise - that any Committee member could remember.

The first proposal was for a site on the western edge near the pitch and putt course, above the pond. However, after initial loud protests from residents of East Fettes Avenue, a ground survey was performed for a second proposal opposite the Botanic Garden west gate. This was unattractive, being further away from bus services. Car parking was also minimal, due to competition with visitors to the Botanic Garden, let alone Standard Life employees and others who used this street as a Park and Walk. Geology and ground water defeated this plan and so it was back to the western edge option - nearest to shops and buses, as well as offering car parking along East Fettes Avenue. It was also near Broughton School, so the often repeated charge of 'reason for skipping school' might be more obviously challenged as a reason for objecting (though this persisted).

Opposition was highly organised and vociferous, from a variety of geographically proximate groups. There was repeated mention of parking chaos, litter, noise levels, toilet need and even attraction for paedophiles, though why those already using the park for pitch and putt, golf practice, boules, football, rugby, softball, model boat drivers, etc., do not attract such attention is difficult to explain. One group even paraded the attraction that skateboarding would have 'for anti-social people who don't skateboard'!

To read the evolution, distillation and history of the proposal, it is interesting to Google 'Skateboard Park Inverleith' and read the current 546 entries! Your society was seen by the Scotsman (17 November 2006) as being one of many organisations against the skateboard park plan. Whilst agreeing that none on the Committee were active skateboarders, the Committee's objections were more concerned with the lack of obvious planning and budgeting for the secondary services that a competition-standard sports arena would need. They also consistently expressed a lack of faith that the Council would devote energies to maintaining such a first-class facility.

There was actually a recorded plea for a skateboard park in the 'Inverleith News' in 1998, so automatic bias should not be assumed. A couple of the Committee members did visit existing skate facilities at Sighthill and Livingston. It was appreciated by your Committee that the final proposed design, sunk into the ground and properly drained, and occupying a footprint of half a tennis court was seen as being highly desirable to the skateboarding community.

To conclude, the proposed skateboard facility was defeated and will no longer be entertained for Inverleith. The many skateboarders who wanted it must wait for a further proposal and a different site - and no doubt another public campaign against the provision of a free sporting facility.

Bernard Kuenssberg

Diary of Mary Anne Gibb, 1847

Twenty page booklet obtainable from Mrs Jean Mitchell, 1 Home Park, Aberdour, Burntisland, Fife KY3 OXA, £2.50.

This little booklet, published in 2004, gives the text of a diary kept by Mary Anne Gibb, age 32, from London, during a visit to Scotland between 5 May and 8 July 1847, made primarily to attend a family wedding (her sister's?). With her mother and brother she stayed at 31 Howard Place - 'pleasantly situated about a mile from the Town' - with Mrs Andrew of Craigend, presumably a relation. Unfortunately, there is no editorial explanation of the links between the many people logged as coming and going in the diary, and this reader could not disentangle the family tree or the network of friends, or even be certain of the bridegroom's name.

However, there are pleasant glimpses of Edinburgh social life in the summer of 1847, with dinner guests and musical evenings, promenades in the Caledonian Society Gardens and the Botanic Gardens across Inverleith Row, and trips to town by noddie (two wheeled hackney carriage). The wedding itself was held in the drawing room in Howard Place, with tables set for 32 guests and five children, and the ceremony conducted by the Rev. William Glover of Greenside Church.

Sundays offered a choice of preachers, Church of Scotland or the new Free Church. Dr Thomas Chalmers died suddenly during their stay, on 31 May, and the great sense of loss is described. Mary Anne records the crowds heading for the funeral procession, and the overflowing memorial services at Tanfield Hall the following Sunday. 'Never in my remembrance did the death even of Royalty ever cause so much real grief as did the

sudden departure of this esteemed Minister.'

There were visits to Holyrood and the Castle, and two trips to Roslin (taking in a carpet factory at Lasswade), and an idyllic picnic in the Pentlands with recitations from Allan Ramsay's Gentle Shepherd. There was a visit to the camera obscura in Short's Observatory on Calton Hill, with women laying out their linen to bleach on the hillside and refreshments from the pastry cook's shop at the foot of Nelson's Column. Some comments remind us of the great changes in Edinburgh at the time, with mentions of Trinity and Granton piers and the lack of planting beside the new railway through Princes Street Gardens.

Perhaps most striking are the descriptions of travelling arrangements and the new possibilities opened up by steamships and railways. The cramped sleeping conditions on the Liverpool to Glasgow steamer on the journey north are graphically described, and the new railway from Glasgow to Edinburgh is much praised. They used coach and carriage to explore the Trossachs from Stirling ('tedious after the railway'), but enjoyed a splendid day trip round Loch Lomond by the well-established steamship. The party travelled through to the west, visiting friends and relations, and there are mentions of steamer and railway expeditions to Glasgow and the Clyde, Falkirk, back down the Forth to Granton, and even a ferry trip to Burntisland. The diary is not great literature but it gives an agreeable reflection of the rapidly increasing possibilities during a summer visit to Scotland.

Andrew Fraser

The Highs and Lows of Inverleith in 1845

*The following extracts are from a little guide by John Willox entitled *The Edinburgh Tourist and Itinerary ... consisting of a Series of Walks in the City*, published by W. H. Lizars. It is undated but clues in the text suggest it was published in 1845. The Inverleith area is part of the fourth walk, pages 152-159.*

‘We arrive at Canonmills Bridge and cross the Water of Leith, passing on the right the entrance to Warriston Crescent, a neat row of moderately sized houses, which would be very pleasant residences were it not for the foetid odours, arising from the filth which is most disgracefully allowed to accumulate from a large common sewer emptying itself into the bed of the river, immediately behind the houses, the sludge from which is allowed to stagnate and ferment almost literally beneath the windows, to the scandal of the public authorities, and the infinite disgust of every passer by.

‘Immediately opposite the entrance to Warriston Crescent, a short distance from the road, stand some isolated buildings of large dimensions, partly occupied as a reservoir of gas, manufactured at the Edinburgh Gas Works, North Back of Canongate, which is forced into this locality, for supplying the lower parts of the city; and partly as a wholesale grocery store. Both parts of these extensive premises were originally built for the purpose of manufacturing gas, by two rival companies, both of which copartneries have long ceased to exist. Their chief importance now arises from the accidental application of a large shed contained in the westernmost of the two buildings, which having undergone a rude upfitting as a place of public meeting, has achieved, under the famous name of Tanfield Hall, a notoriety promising fairly to outlive the durable structure of the fabric itself.’ Here follows an account of the Disruption meeting that founded the Free Church of Scotland in 1843; the Hall itself was demolished to make way for Standard Life’s Tanfield offices, but its

fame does indeed live on, commemorated in a plaque in the garden in front.

‘After passing Tanfield, in proceeding northward – with Howard Place on the right, and Inverleith Row on the left, two handsome rows of villas, with flower-plots in front – a short distance brings us to the gate of the Experimental Gardens of the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society ... The society was instituted in the year 1809, by a number of gentlemen, anxious for promoting and improving the cultivation of the best kinds of fruits, of the most choice flowers, and of the most useful of culinary vegetables ... The ground occupied by these gardens consists of eight Scots acres, which, in the year 1824, were purchased by the Crown for an experimental garden, and let to the society on a very favourable lease ... Free access to the gardens is most liberally afforded to strangers ...

‘Immediately adjoining, on the north of the Experimental Gardens, is the Royal Botanic Garden ... Gratuitous admission to the garden, and green and hot houses, is freely obtained, on application at the gate any time before six o’clock, evening, and a more delightful, or more highly interesting exhibition, is not to be found.

‘Leaving the Botanic Garden ... we pass, on the left, Inverleith Place, and arrive at Golden Acre, extending on both sides of the road, and cultivated as nursery-grounds ... All of these grounds are beautifully laid out, and to all the public have free egress and regress during the whole of each lawful day; the whole of these delightful grounds, taken together, forming a treat to the florist, the horticulturalist, the arboriculturalist, or the botanist, such as cannot be surpassed within so circumscribed an area in the neighbourhood of any town in the kingdom.

‘Immediately to the south of Lawson’s nursery, turning to the east, is a road leading to the New Cemetery, an ornamental burying-ground, which



Edinburgh, from Warriston Cemetery, 1843

was opened to the public in 1843. The ground is tastefully laid out in ornamental catacombs and plain burial places, intersected by winding walks, having flower-bed borders, and interspersed by monumental erections in every diversity of taste ...

‘Passing through the Cemetery, which commands a splendid view of Edinburgh, and returning by the south approach, we recross the Water of Leith by means of a neat and substantial wooden bridge [no longer there], and continuing along the margin of the river, pass under a skewed bridge of stone, over which is carried the Edinburgh, Leith, Newhaven and Granton Railway. At this point we are opposite the back of Warriston Crescent, and will be most amazingly fortunate, if we receive not ample confirmation of the previously stated abominable condition of the river bed, through the instrumentality of more organs than the olfactory nerves alone. Pursuing the path, which will, in all probability, be done without much lingering, we again reach the south end of Canonmills Bridge.’

The sewage problem was reviewed by Henry Littlejohn, Edinburgh’s first Medical Officer of Health, in his Report on the Sanitary Condition of Edinburgh in 1865. ‘The Water of Leith not

only drains the whole of the New Town north of George Street, but also receives the sewage of a large district of the City lying to the west, which joins it at Coltbridge ... It was to remedy this anomalous state of matters that the bill of last session was passed, which provided for the prevention of further contamination of the river by the construction of large pipes, to collect the sewage and pass it directly to the sea. At present the Water of Leith, in its passage through Edinburgh, is a great open sewer.’ By 1896 John Geddie, in *The Water of Leith, from Source to the Sea*, wrote that ‘it has been restored to something of its original purity by the Improvement Scheme. No longer can it be dubbed a “common open sewer”. The paper-millers have to treat the water they use in their processes in settling ponds before returning it to the river; the sewage is conveyed by a conduit sunk below the bed of the stream, and is emptied well out at sea; the mill lades that offended by carrying their frothing contents under the noses of the occupants of dwelling-houses have been suppressed; the water has been re-stocked with trout, and the angler may shortly enjoy sport under the arches of the Dean Bridge.’

Andrew Fraser

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THE INVERLEITH SOCIETY

AGM NOTICE

MONDAY 26 MARCH 2007

AT 7.00PM

LECTURE THEATRE,
ROYAL BOTANIC GARDEN,
20A INVERLEITH ROW

The 33rd AGM of the Inverleith Society will be held on Monday 26 March at 7.00pm (doors open 6.45pm). Copies of the minutes and accounts of the previous AGM on 7 November 2005 will be available before the meeting begins.

After the AGM there will be a talk by

ALAN COCHRANE

(LOCAL RESIDENT)

SCOTTISH EDITOR OF THE TELEGRAPH

Scotland, the best small Country
in the world - Discuss.

The committee would like to thank the Regius Keeper for allowing us to use the Lecture Theatre.