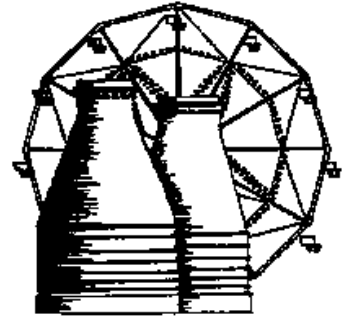


PORTOBELLO AMENITY SOCIETY

Newsletter - Winter 2000



Gardening Competition

The Garden Competition is an annual joint venture between Portobello Garden Centre and Portobello Amenity Society and has been run for several years. The competition, which was judged in August, has two categories - for gardens of all sizes; and for containers Jean Kerr, of Mountcastle Drive South, won the latter category and is pictured here with her plants in all their glory. Christina Moffat was the winner of the garden section. The judges observed many other beautiful gardens in the course of their travels and hope for more entries next year.

Information Boards

The “horizon” boards were erected on the Promenade, one at the foot of King’s Road and one at the foot of John Street, in September. The paintings by Shand Hutchison identify features of the horizon as viewed from these two positions.

The purpose of these colourful and informative boards, to add to the interest and appearance of the Promenade, has been endorsed by regular Promenaders.

Five information boards have now been placed along the Promenade as a project joint with the Community Council. Experience has shown the need for polycarbonate covers on the boards as protection against vandals, a requirement that has increased the time and cost of the enterprise and produces moisture between board and polycarbonate which can detract from the image.

Work on the remaining two boards “Portobello as a Seaside Resort” and “The Natural History of the Seashore” is in hand. The latter board, funded by an Edinburgh Environment Partnership

Millennium Award to Alison Robinson, will involve local children and work on it will take place next spring/summer: funding was not available in time for this summer. Anyone with a child over nine years of age who would like to draw the plants and animals of Portobello sea-shore on a day to be arranged next spring/summer should leave a message for Alison Robinson at the Portobello library.

Planting

Tête-à-tête daffodils were planted in Brighton Park this autumn so we can look forward to an even bigger display next spring. Suggestions for other sites for bulbs in Portobello would be welcome. The surrounds of the grassy area at the foot of Marlborough Street will be planted once the projected landscaping by the Council is completed.

A new tree to replace the one blown down in Morton Street triangle will be planted this autumn now the old stump has been removed by the Council.

The hanging baskets along the High Street survived the gales of summer, thanks to watering by Gill and George Anderson and Anthony Mancini. Placing the baskets higher up the lamp-posts has deterred removal by thieves.

Planning Issues

Three planning applications for the Portobello/Milton area, one a new application, and two which were reported on in our Spring newsletter, are causing strong local opposition.

24, Milton Road East, (within the grounds of Jewel and Esk Valley College),- the erection of an indoor bowling centre.) This application was granted, despite strong local opposition and despite 80 letters of objection having been sent to the planning department. The building has now been built and local residents' fears that the 59metre by 48 metre metal clad building would overshadow their houses have, unfortunately, been fully realised. What the application did not show clearly was that, in order to erect the structure, the ground would have to be made level. This has had the most unfortunate result that the building is now one and a half metres higher than it was thought it would be, the ground nearest to residents in Brunstane Bank having been raised to level the site. No site visit was carried out before the application was granted although it is understood that Councillor Child had asked for one to be done. Once again, local residents feel that money has triumphed over genuine local feelings and concerns.

24/26 Brunstane Road. This application, to erect 53 flats in several 3 and 4 storey blocks on the site of the former Heather Valley Woolen Factory, has still, (at the time this newsletter was printed), to be determined. P.A.S. objected to the application on the grounds that the proposed new build did not match the quality of the nearby Victorian villas within the conservation area in Argyle Crescent. We also felt that the development would access Brunstane Road at a very vulnerable point and add considerably to the traffic problems which the road already has. We believe that over 135 objections to the proposal have been lodged. Both Susan Deacon MSP and Portobello Community Council wrote on behalf of constituents objecting to the application but their letters are believed to have been "lost" by the planning department. Councillor Child has outlined her concerns and those of objectors to Planning and a site visit has been carried out. A proposal has been put forward that, as a condition for grant of this application, traffic lights should be put at the bridge on Brunstane Road.

28 The Promenade. A new application was lodged recently to erect a five storey block of nine flats on the Promenade at the east corner of Bath Street. P.A.S. strongly objected to the application on several counts. We believe the proposals to be completely out of character with both the conservation area and the fine "B" listed Victorian tenements nearby. The building would be on stilts over a ground floor car

park which would be partly screened by a wavy mosaic-clad wall. The outside walls would be clad with ceramic tiles, while the roof would be of flat sloping aluminium. We felt that the proposed materials would be completely out of character with the surrounding buildings which are predominantly of stone and slate while the building itself would be far too large, completely overshadowing both its neighbours and the Promenade itself.

John Street Paddling Pool

A group of local people, led by Councillor Child, has got together to put forward proposals for the improvement of this site. Local people have filled in questionnaires, meetings and a workshop have been held, an exhibition has been set up in the library and a stall set up at the site itself where people were asked for their comments on three alternative proposals put forward as a result of the workshop, proposals designed to stimulate the public's imagination as regards how the site might be improved. It is envisaged that the site could be laid out, landscaped and designed to suit a variety of uses by people of all ages. The views of both local residents and visitors to Portobello are being sought and further public meetings will be held once the results of the questionnaires have been analysed. The council has given an undertaking that the site will remain in public ownership and be used for recreational purposes. P.A.S. is part of the group drawing up the proposals for this site and carrying out the public consultation.

Portobello Walkabout

John Stewart and Iain Abbott, two active members of PAS, recently led a group from the Cockburn Society on a walking tour of Portobello. The leaders concentrated particularly on gap-sites on the Promenade and on sites for which controversial planning applications were currently being considered. But the tour also included many of Portobello's buildings of historical and architectural interest, and one of the highlights was a trip to all that remains of Hugh Millar's house, off the High Street, and of the geological museum that he built in his garden. The group also admired the skilful restoration of the interior plasterwork that Andrew and Alison Kinghorn had undertaken in their house, one of the few Grade-A listed interiors in Portobello.

Portobello's MSP

Susan Deacon, our member of the Scottish Parliament, recently attended an informal meeting of the Amenity Society at which matters relating to the Promenade and its problems were discussed. The meeting was very well attended, and the discussion ranged over the reasons for the multiplicity of studies of the Prom, and the failure of their implementations; over the gap sites on the Prom and the need to maintain public open spaces for public leisure use; as well as the lessons to be learnt from the waterfront enhancement scheme currently being completed in Bridlington, which was the subject of a study trip by one of the Amenity Society's members. Our thanks go to Susan for listening to us so patiently. We hope that the influence that she will be able to bring to bear will bear fruit in the regeneration and enhancement of Portobello's outstanding and characteristic feature.

Friends of Abercorn Park

George Murray, a P.A.S. member, has arranged a series of meetings of people living round Abercorn Park who are keen to improve the appearance and maintenance of the park. The group aims to monitor grass and hedge cutting, the emptying of the litter bins, instances of vandalism and any other issues which need tackling. Several useful and productive meetings have been held between the group and Ron Dymond and Scott Thomson of the council's Environmental Task Force, which is responsible for the upkeep of the park. The council has agreed that the park is essentially an ornamental park which implies the need for a high standard of maintenance. Since the group was set up, the council has installed a fine new gate at the S.E. corner, removed a damaged and dangerous seat and accepted that the present gate at

the N.E.corner accessing directly onto Elcho Terrace is dangerous and needs to be relocated. Other issues raised by the group with the council include the issues of dog fouling and football involving large groups of youths, replacement tree planting, the state of the paths and the layout , planting and upkeep of the flower beds. The group will continue to press for improvements on all these issues. Ron Dymond has offered that anyone with a particular issue to raise with him concerning the state of the park can reach him direct at the Environmental Task Force on his mobile. His number is 07788 923 649. Members of the group have already done so and elicited a very speedy response !

Town Scheme Grants Available for Portobello

Town Scheme Grants are for work of a relatively modest scale which would not normally qualify for a conservation grant, but could improve the character of a Conservation Area such as Portobello. This covers putting shop fronts back to their original form, including glazing patterns and carved ornament; domestic timber sash and case windows, and fanlights with original astragal patterns; stone chimneys, copes and skews; slate or pantile roofs; cast iron railings, gates and balconies, and more. The removal of non-traditional features will also be eligible, such as paint or render on stonework or brick, modern flush or pseudo 'historic' doors, and boxed shutters on shop fronts. The normal maximum grant, to cover up to 50% of the cost, is £3000. Application forms are available from the Head of Planning, City of Edinburgh Council, City Development, 1 Cockburn St, Edinburgh EH1 1ZJ. Tel. 529 3982.

Local Business Support For P.A.S.

Please use our excellent local businesses, especially those which help the society to make Portobello a pleasant place to live and to work. The society is very grateful to the following businesses for their continued support as associate business members: -

Allan's, Chemist; Robin Bond, CA; Boots, Chemist; The Citizens' Advice Bureau; Findlay Meats; Brian Forde, Optician; Gordons, Butchers; Joppa Food Store; H.S.Kidd, Chemist; The King's Manor Hotel; Kitchener's Delicatessen; Kristoffersen Carpets; Lapland Gems; McAlpine's, Jewellers; McIntyre Lewis, Solicitors & Estate Agents; Nazim, Newsagent; J & S Penman, Vets; The Portobello Garden Centre; Portobello Library; Jas. Scott, Funeral Directors; Shapes Hair; Sibbald Travel; Thomson's, Ironmongers.

Our especial thanks also go to McIntyre Lewis, and J & S Penman, Vets for their generous donations towards our planting projects throughout Portobello.

Please support our local businesses, especially those who themselves support our local community.

P.A.S. Monthly Meetings

Would you like to find out more about what is happening in Portobello? Would you like something done about Portobello's traffic and parking problems? Are you interested in protecting and enhancing Portobello's many listed buildings? Would you like to see the amenity of Portobello improved and environmental and landscaping projects carried out?

If the answer to any or all of the above questions is yes, then you are most welcome to come along to any of P.A.S.'s regular monthly meetings to air your views and to find out just what the society is doing to improve Portobello for everyone who lives and works here. For details of meetings, please phone **John Stewart** on **669 6466**.