

THE Portobello REPORTER

Quarterly: Spring 2024
Delivered in and around Portobello; circulation 13,000
Also available online on www.porty.org.uk

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ISSUE

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The independent voice of Portobello

Your Community Newspaper
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SWIM CENTRE - SAFE FOR NOW

LOCAL people have been alarmed at recent stories about the possible closure of the Portobello Swimming Centre. Though people across the city use the centre – an average of 270 a day – it is also a highly valued local resource.

The Portobello Reporter contacted Edinburgh Leisure and the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) to establish the exact position regarding closure.

Edinburgh Leisure faces significant financial challenges in 2024-25 due to various factors, including further increases in energy costs. In December, information on eight possible venue closures, which included the swim centre, was prepared for a meeting of Edinburgh Leisure's board. This was intended to illustrate the scale of the challenges ahead and the potential impact on services; it was not a proposal to close the premises.

Edinburgh Leisure has been working with CEC to see how these financial challenges can be addressed. An extra £3.2m has now been identified to support leisure facilities across the city. This was included in CEC's 2024-25 budget which was approved on 22nd February.

In January, June Peebles, the outgoing CEO of Edinburgh Leisure, told the Reporter: "There are no venue closures planned for at this time and people should feel confident that we are doing everything we can to maintain our venues." People in Portobello will breathe a big sigh of relief. However, uncertain economic times mean Edinburgh Leisure will continue to face tricky times ahead.

Portobello Swim
Centre is well used
by the community



PHOTO: NEIL BRAIDWOOD



Portobello Baptist Church when the
clock (inset) was in situ

PHOTO: PORTOBELLO HERITAGE TRUST

PORTOBELLO'S MUNICIPAL CLOCK

TWENTY years ago the City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) removed our municipal clock from the Baptist Church building on what were stated to be health and safety grounds. Many residents will have no knowledge of the clock's existence. CEC spent thousands of pounds repairing the clock then denied ownership. Historical research proved otherwise. The clock was not part of the original building, which was Portobello's first town hall, but was gifted to the people of Portobello and attached to the building on condition that it was never removed. This made it the responsibility of Portobello Burgh Council and, on Portobello's

merger with Edinburgh, responsibility was transferred. CEC maintained the clock and electrified it. Members of Portobello Baptist Church are keen to have the clock reinstated. They have, however, been waiting several years for a legal agreement from CEC agreeing its responsibility for maintenance and insurance. Portobello Heritage Trust, Portobello Amenity Society, local councillors and the church are working together to have the clock reinstated, but CEC is refusing to say when this will happen. The clock is now fully restored and ready to be put back up but CEC seems to be unwilling to provide the funding for this to finally happen.

PAVEMENT PARKING

PARKING on pavements is now illegal in Scotland. Residents in Regent and Marlborough Streets received letters about the new law from City of Edinburgh Council (CEC), as these streets had cars parked on the pavements on a regular basis.

Once the legislation came into force on Monday 29th January, however, it was clear that there was no space for emergency vehicles or bin lorries to gain access. Double yellow lines have now been painted, despite CEC stating in its original letter that no double yellow lines were planned for these streets. The fine for parking on a pavement is £100.

PORTY PROFILE No. 87

JENNIFER ELLIOT

A **ONE-WOMAN** community powerhouse, Jennifer Elliot has lived in Portobello, with her family, for 16 years. As a professional working mum, she first became involved in the local community as a member of the parent-led after-school club committee at Towerbank Primary School, saving the club from losing its base at the school.

“The committee were a really good bunch and volunteering there ignited my passion for the Portobello community” said Jennifer.

Moving to Action Porty, she was part of the team who successfully campaigned to save the former Portobello Old Parish Church for community use as Bellfield. It was the first successful urban community right-to-buy under the Community Empowerment Act and is now a Development Trust with a wide and ambitious local community remit.

As one of the founders and Chair of Porty Central, a charity set up to take the Portobello Town Hall back into community management, Jennifer and the committee were delighted to win significant grants allowing it to re-open in 2023 as a venue for weddings, parties and community events.

“Bellfield and the Town Hall are important community spaces. Buildings like this won’t be built again, so we fought to keep them” explained Jennifer. “When was the last time a village hall or town hall was built?”

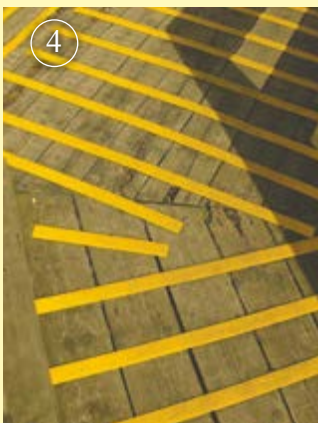
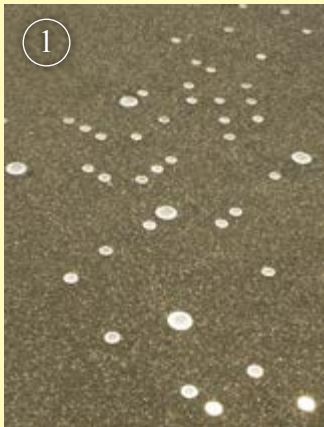
She has since resigned as Chair to “leave a new generation to write the next chapters” but remains an active volunteer with Portobello Town Hall and Action Porty.

Jennifer also plays an active part in Porty Community Fridge, which gives people access to surplus food from local supermarkets, thereby reducing food waste. Her role as Bike Librarian, which involves using e-cargo bikes from Porty Bike Library to collect the surplus food, was initially on a volunteer basis and then as a part-time Project Worker.



PHOTO: ANDREW MYLNE

WHERE AM I?



PHOTOS: ANDREW MYLNE

Try to identify where these places are.
Answers on page eight.

Volunteering has influenced her working life and Jennifer is delighted to now be working at Craigmillar Greenhouse Pantry, a low-cost food cooperative for those in the Greater Craigmillar area, dealing with food insecurity. To be earning her living from development and care work satisfies her sense of purpose, dealing with the issues that matter to her and continuing her passion for making connections in a community that she would now find it very hard to leave.

Annette Gann

What's On

ST PATRICKS DAY FUN FIDDLE CEILIDH

Sun. 17th Mar. 3pm, The Wash House, Adelphi Grove. Tickets from www.bit.ly/WHfiddletix Snack Bar (cash only). All profits to Screen Porty.

CAR BOOT SALES (Rotary Club of Portobello): Sun. 31st Mar, Newcraighall Station car park. Then every last Sunday of the month until October. Sellers arrive from 7.30am, buyers from 8.30am. Cars £12, large vans £18, no pre-booking. Enquiries to 07708 796737 / 07523 689839.

PORTOBELLO MARKET: 1st Sat. of month, Brighton Park. portobello.market@live.co.uk

PAMOJA FASHION: Quality Clothes/Accessories: 1st Sat of the month, 10am-1pm, St John’s Church Hall, Brighton Place. Supporting partnerships between schools and communities in Scotland and Tanzania

COMMUNITY FRIDGE: Sats, 10.30-11.30am, Baptist Church Hall, Portobello High St. Surplus food from shops available, to combat waste. Donations for food bank from 11.30am.

PARKRUN: Sats, 9.30am, Figgate Park. 5K. Free. www.parkrun.org.uk/portobello

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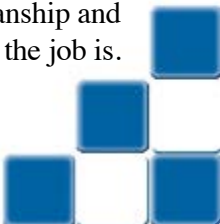
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portyrep@gmail.com

HEART SAFE PORTOBELLO

A NEW 24/7 defibrillator funded by Action Porty has been installed on the exterior of Bellfield at 16B Bellfield Street (pictured). Alan Simpson of Action Porty said: "We decided that we wanted to install a defibrillator for the benefit not only of those using Bellfield but also anyone in the locality." 24/7 defibrillators can also be found at locations including St John's Church Brighton Place, Brunstane Road North, Portobello Golf Course and Joppa Community Tennis Club. There are restricted access defibrillators at locations including Scotmid, Tumbles, Portobello Swim Centre, Portobello



High School, Portobello Surgery at 265 Portobello High Street, mydentist at 216 Portobello High Street and 34 Brunstane Road. No prior training is required to use a defibrillator. Once turned on it will verbally give clear instructions and will only give an electric shock if needed. When someone has a cardiac arrest, every second counts, so while waiting for the ambulance, it's important to start CPR and use a defibrillator. The 999-call handler will tell the caller where the nearest defibrillator is, so it can be retrieved while someone carries on doing CPR.

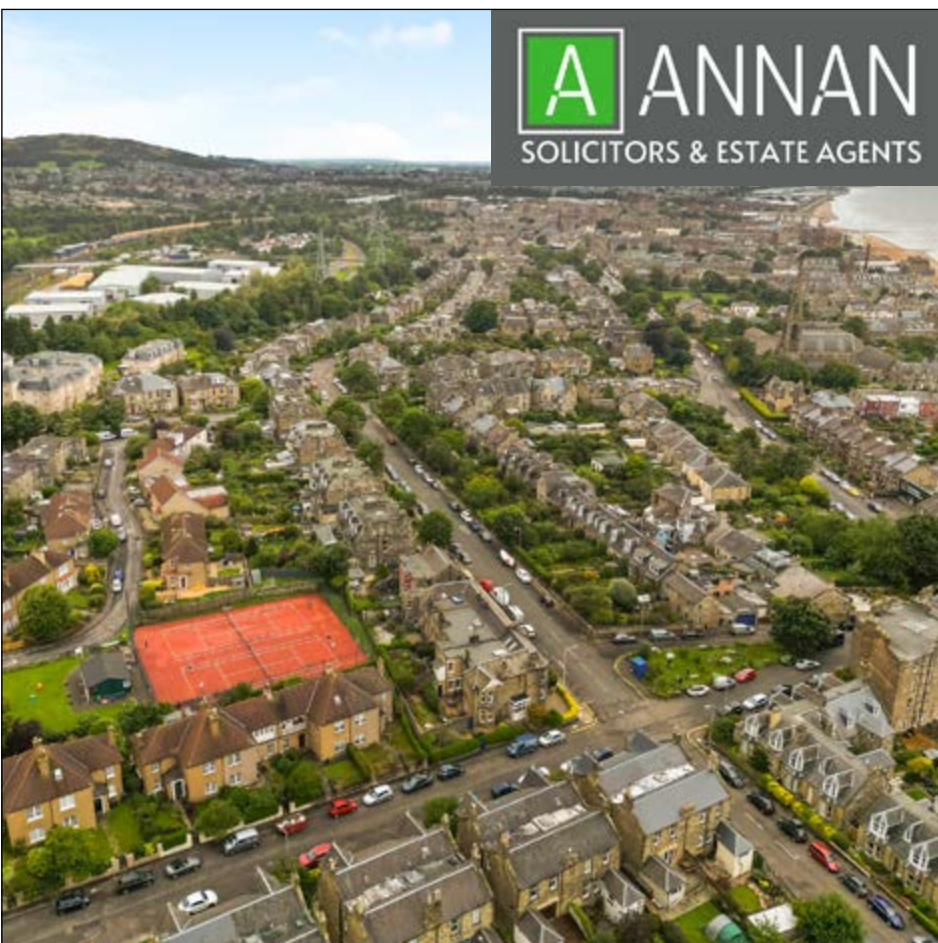
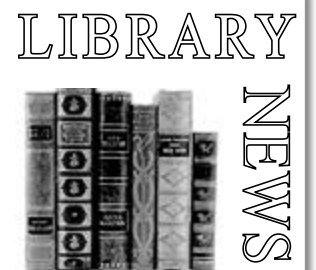
IT WILL soon be Easter and we have been planning our school holiday activities for children. For details, ask a member of staff or check for event posts on Facebook.

There is still time to have your say in shaping the future of Edinburgh's libraries by filling in our Future Libraries survey at www.edinburgh.gov.uk/futurelibraries or a paper copy, available at the library. This will help develop a new strategy for Edinburgh libraries to ensure that the service is sustainable and meets your needs. The survey closes on Friday 19th April.

Did you know that there is a day when you can bring your (well behaved) dog into the library? We have been running Dog Friendly Thursdays for nearly a year and have enjoyed meeting the lovely dogs of Portobello. Visiting dogs can also get a free treat and the opportunity to appear on our social media. There's also a chance to meet our new Thursday part-timer – Orvie the Chihuahua!

Author, therapist and podcaster Gin Lalli will visit us on the evening of Wednesday 17th April to talk about the science behind how the brain functions during anxiety, stress and depression, and how understanding the biological processes enables us to manage symptoms. Tickets are available from the library.

Paul Hudson



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	- Conquer Gravity	(Baptist Church Hall-Live)	- 19:45 - 20:35hrs
Wednesdays	- Mat Class	(The Original - Live)	- 18:15 - 19:25hrs
	- Mat Pilates	(The Original - Virtual)	- 20:00 - 21:00hrs
Thursdays	- Mat Pilates	(The Original - Virtual)	- 09:30 - 10:15hrs

Magic Circle Pilates (Virtual) 2024:

Fridays	9:30-10:15am	1st Mar'24	5th Apr'24	3rd May'24
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Trigger Point Pilates (Virtual/Live) 2024:

Saturday	9:30-10:30am	29th Mar'24	27th Apr'24	25th May'24
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SEEDS shouldn't be sown outside until the soil is warm, but they can be started off earlier indoors on windowsills or in a greenhouse, if you have one. Harden seedlings off well before planting out and cover with fleece, such as old net curtains. I find these work well and last for years. Try to grow something new along with your usual favourites.

Weeding can be therapeutic, but I also view the job as a crop for the compost heap. The compost is used to grow seeds in a mix of a third grit, vermiculite or perlite, a third sieved compost and a third sieved leaf mould. Leaf mould takes a year to rot down and is well worth collecting. Looking after your soil's microbial life is extremely important, so keep an eye on your compost heap. If there is a dry summer, wet it and if wet, cover it over.

Make nettle or comfrey tea as soon as leaves are large enough, by seeping them in water for a few weeks. Then it will be ready for feeding the first tomatoes and other hungry crops.

Sow night-scented stock near where you sit, for a fabulous scent. Plant honeysuckle and you may attract bats which are in the area.

THIS winter has been warmer than usual, with temperatures averaging more than 1.5 degrees above the pre-industrial level for the past year. This has resulted in increased energy from the oceans producing greater atmospheric turmoil. Locally, there have been more cancellations than ever of the Portobello Local Market due to high wind speeds and the temporary stalls at risk of blowing over. Cancellation is disappointing, both for our traders and loyal customers and we do not take the decision lightly, but safety is our first consideration. The market organised by PEDAL is held on the first Saturday of the month in Brighton Park.

On the beach, concern has been raised about groin four failing due to recent storms. Groynes fulfil a vital function in keeping sand from drifting, with a high sand level dissipating wave energy before hitting the sea wall. A specification has been prepared for tendering by the council and work should take place in 2025/26. Repairs may be carried out to the other groynes including the eastern one formed from gabions.

The protection of the coastline is something that we should all be concerned about as rising sea levels and increased storm surges threaten the long-term sustainability of Portobello.

SUSTAINABLE PORTY

by Stephen Hawkins

PORTY PENNYPINCHER

IF YOU own your home, you can make it work for you by renting out a room to a lodger or doing a house swap with someone in another country.

But have you thought about whether your house might be suitable as a film location? If you live in a period property or with views of the sea, movie makers could be beating a path to your door!

You can register your property on the Film Edinburgh database, which is then seen by filmmakers around the world. If your house or flat fits the bill, then you could earn money by letting them film there. See www.filmedinburgh.org/Locations/Register

BRUNSTANE/ COILLEDENE TRAFFIC PLANS

THE City of Edinburgh Council's decision on making permanent the closure of Brunstane Road and routing traffic through the Coillesdenes was first delayed until January, due to the large number of objections received. It is now likely to go to committee in March.

PORTY WATER COLLECTIVE

THE Porty Water Collective is an initiative committed to protecting the waters around Portobello. Unfortunately, we know the water quality varies significantly around heavy rainfall due to Combined Sewage Overflows (CSOs) being opened. The Figgate Burn tested at unsafe levels of E-coli throughout the 2022 bathing season.

Our volunteers have been carrying out water quality checks most weeks since September 2023, which have produced more concerning evidence of untreated sewage in our water.

We now want to bring more volunteers into the Collective to decide as a community how to continue the testing, display the data and advance our campaign to improve water quality in Portobello.

Please join us at an open meeting at Portobello Library from 5-8pm on Tuesday 12th March.


David Lyons

TOMMY SHEPPARD MP

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PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

P O R T O B E L L O Community Council meets on the last Monday of each month at 7.30pm, except July and December. See www.portobellocc.org for information on meetings, Agendas and Minutes, Planning news, PCC and City Council consultations, or ask at the library. PCC is now co-opting members – if interested, see the website.

FROM THE ARCHIVE BY MARGARET MUNRO

ROYAL VISIT

PHOTO: PORTOBELLO HERITAGE TRUST



THIS photograph of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, opening the refurbished playpark in Mount Lodge in, we believe, 1971 sparked much discussion on social media when Portobello Heritage Trust put it up locally. Why Prince Philip came to open the park is unknown, but as it probably took place at the end of June, the Royal family would have been in residence at the

Palace of Holyroodhouse.

One striking aspect of the photograph is the lack of security surrounding the prince, an indicator of how much tighter security surrounding the royal family has become in the past 50 years. We believe the man accompanying Prince Philip is Conservative Councillor Kenneth Borthwick who later became Lord Provost of Edinburgh.

Children from Towerbank, St John's and Brunstane primary schools were sent along to the playpark for the prince's visit. They appear to be having a good time. The boat, named *Blue Peter*, was apparently set on fire in the early 70s. Do you recognise yourself in the photograph? If so, please get in touch at admin@portobelloheritagetrust.co.uk

EDINBURGH DOG AND CAT HOME

THE Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home (EDCH) would like to thank the community for their overwhelming support of our Winter Appeal. In total, individual and business supporters helped us raise over £100,000.

It costs almost £3 million annually to run the home, so this support is invaluable. It means we can continue to support dogs like Bagel, who almost didn't make it, but will soon celebrate one happy year in her forever home, and people like Susan who would have had to give up her pets without the help of our pet food banks. Read their stories at www.edch.org.uk/news

This year, we're celebrating 140 years of EDCH. We've come a long way since opening our doors in 1884, and we're determined to keep going.

Betty Henderson

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PORTOBELLO ROTARY CLUB 70TH ANNIVERSARY

PORTOBELLO Rotary Club celebrated its 70th anniversary in February 2024. It is one of more than 35,000 clubs, with over 1.2 million members in over 200 countries.

Drawing on the international theme for this year – 'Create Hope in the World' – the Portobello Rotary Club works for peace and mental wellbeing. As well as meeting regularly for friendship, it fundraises in various ways including through its car boot sale on the last Sunday of the month from March to October at Newcraighall Park and Ride.

The Club has supported a wide range of projects locally and internationally. Recent local beneficiaries have included Portobello Older People's Project and Body and Soul, the latter of which sponsored the courageous Porty rowing crew on the Atlantic Challenge last year.

The Club is open to anyone – it's not just for a select few – and it's keen to have new members. If you're interested, please contact Gabriela Aguado, the Club President, at email gabiaguado@hotmail.com

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WE ARE thrilled with our new website – www.thewashhouse.org – designed by artist/web designer Lindsay Perth.

City of Edinburgh Council continues to support activities at the Wash House, and we are working closely with them to revive youth and children’s clubs.

We are in conversation with Edinburgh Fringe around setting up the centre as a performance venue, so look out for top class arts and cultural events on your own doorstep! Screen Porty is going from strength to strength. If you are looking for a venue to start local classes, just go to the website for information on booking.

Gica Loening

PORTOBELLO TOWN HALL

AS SPRING approaches, we have started to consider how to use our outdoor space and we are starting a consultation about the best way to use it. We would love to hear your opinions.

The Town Hall would not be so special without the love and support of our community. Our ‘Thank You’ event celebrated our supporters and unveiled a beautiful ‘wall of thanks’ by Laura Campbell which you can see on your next visit.

The sensational comeback of professional panto, after a 40-year hiatus from our stage, was just the beginning. There is so much more coming up: more wrestling; Northern Soul; Makers’ Markets and theatre and another fabulous Porty Pride Ball.

Stay tuned via portobellotownhall.org ‘Portobello Town Hall’ on Facebook and [@portobellotownhall](https://www.instagram.com/portobellotownhall) on Instagram.

Wendy Davies

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AMNESTY – LOCAL NEWS


THE year kicked off positively for Amnesty International’s Portobello group with a mid-January visit by four group members to Portobello High School, where they engaged with the very helpful staff and students about Amnesty’s work worldwide. The response was encouraging, with S3 pupils writing an impressive 168 cards bearing messages of support to just a few of AI’s many prisoners of conscience and other cases.

February’s market stall was cancelled due to the weather. However, the group’s fund-raising Pub Quiz Night at the Artisan at Abbeyhill on 9th February proved a great success. As ever, the quiz covered everything from human rights issues, through general knowledge, to the manic sing-along music round, raising £522 towards Amnesty International UK’s work – a record for that particular event.

The spring brings Portobello Group AI’s popular book sale and coffee morning, once again at Bellfield, from 10-noon on Saturday, 13th April. Expect coffee, home baking, odds and ends, live musical interludes... and, of course, books a-plenty. All donations of books gratefully received, so rifle through your shelves and contact Jim Gilchrist (gilchrist767@btinternet.com).

The group meets at 7.30pm on the second Monday of the month in Portobello and Joppa Parish Church. All welcome. (Contact: theresa.mcmurtry@gmail.com)

Jim Gilchrist



THIS year, International Women’s Day events are being held across the globe to celebrate and to inspire inclusion for women. Join us at Tribe Porty on Friday 8th March, from 7pm, for a poetry evening and our special guest, author Briana Pegado. The suggested donation for this event is £5 and anyone is welcome. Proceeds will be donated to Edinburgh Women’s Aid. Head to tribeparty.org to book your space.

Alice Hudson

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SCREEN PORTY

SCREEN Porty is back with a fabulous film programme for 2024. In February they gave us two films, including the first family matinee and on Saturday 23rd March they will bring us *The Farewell* (PG) at The Wash House. Check out screenporty.org for more details and you can also find them at [facebook.com/groups/screenporty](https://www.facebook.com/groups/screenporty)

ACTION PORTY

BELLFIELD continues to evolve as a vibrant and increasingly well used community hub, largely through the efforts of our marvellous staff and volunteer teams, and the commitment of our regular users.

To meet unmet demand, and address various issues with the facility, Action Porty is looking to fund a major redevelopment of Bellfield, which will create a greater, more flexible range of spaces – particularly within the Celebration Hall. We hope to kick off our fundraising efforts by launching a community share issue in the late spring – more details to follow!

Our volunteer-run Friday café continues to grow in popularity, and we have recently installed cycling hoops for both bikes and e-cargo bikes outside Bellfield.

Ian Cooke

NATURE NOTES

WITH a short walk or cycle from Portobello, you could be lucky enough to see one of the most fun, and often misinterpreted, wildlife spectacles of spring: the Mad March Hares.

Brown hares are becoming a little more visible at this time of year, shunning their usually anti-social behaviour approaching mating season. Hares are significantly larger than their rabbit cousins, and more solitary in nature. Camouflaged in a gingery-brown coat, rather than digging tunnels, they stay above ground in depressions they create called 'forms'. You can be almost on top of them before they bolt on incredibly long and powerful legs.

But in spring, with love in the air, they take to boxing. Often thought to be two males competing to show their prowess, it is in fact the female fighting away the advances of suitors, possibly testing their strength to determine their suitability as a mate.

Once thought to be an animal shape which could be assumed by witches, hares now are a more potent symbol of the changing of the seasons, coming out of hiding in the long undergrowth, to put on a show of speed and agility.

Brunstane Mill Park, up to the Newhailes estate, is a possible sighting location, though less likely if a lot of dogs are being walked. There is sometimes a better chance on the scrubland between Newcraighall and Queen Margaret University. Hares are definitely worth the trip and patience.

Anthony Robson



A brown hare

PHOTO: ANTHONY ROBSON

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SWIMMING CLUB

PORTOBELLO Amateur Swimming Club (PASC) celebrated another year of success in the pool in January with the Annual Awards and Ceilidh at Bellfield. We are a friendly, community-based club, yet proud to have swimmers and water polo players at the top end of competition. Annually we have swimmers qualify for District and National Championships as finalists and occasional medallists. Recent years have seen swimmers qualify for the British Summer Championships and National Youth Academy.

Our water polo teams compete in the Scottish League, with the U17 and U19 boys reaching the Scottish Cup Finals last year. Portobello U19 boys won the BMC Cup in December, and the Senior Men held their title as Scottish Cup Winners. We have players in all National Development Squads, with two players recently selected for the U18 GB Squad. For enquiries contact [portyascmembersh@gmail.com](mailto:portyascmembersh@portyascmembersh@gmail.com) or visit our website, Facebook, and Instagram pages.

Lucy Scott-Watson



BEACH VOLLEYBALL

EDINBURGH Beach Volleyball Club has been busy over the winter months, planning for the summer season ahead. We've also been repairing the damage done to our courts by the numerous storms which saw our equipment float away on several occasions due to high tides and high winds. We have had tremendous support to help get our courts back to working order from local residents and members. We are not quite there yet but we will be by later in the spring. We are really excited to bring even more activities than ever before to the local Portobello community.

Lynne Beattie

IN THE SADDLE

ONE of the great pleasures of club cycling is how, over time, you build familiarity with your local area. There's hardly a country road within 30 miles that we've not ridden along on a Portovelo ride at one time or another – to the point where finding a new one has become quite a challenge when planning routes. Our rides take us through rolling farmland, up onto the moors and through towns and villages of all shapes and sizes. We're lucky in the variety on offer, and the cultural interest too: last summer, I led a ride that visited 10 castles in one morning: Craigmillar, Dalhousie, Borthwick, Crichton, Lennoxlove, Hailes, Tantallon, Dirleton, Redhouse and Fa'side. However, it's probably the local cafés that we've become most familiar with – if you ever need a recommendation for a good coffee stop in the Lothians or Borders, ask a Portovelo regular!

Our road rides are now leaving at 8am every Sunday and 9am every Wednesday; gravel rides at 9.30am every second Saturday. All are welcome. Full details on porto-velo.com.

Andrew Mylne



ROW PORTY

IN BETWEEN the storms and frequent strong winds, Rowporty (the rowing section of Portobello Sailing and Kayaking Club – PSKC) kept active on the water throughout the winter months, while other PSKC members managed the occasional chilly sail.

The club's kayakers, however, have been keeping warm by paddling indoors. Regular Saturday sessions in Leith Academy's pool for adults and juniors have provided the basics to complete beginners and allowed more experienced

kayakers to maintain fitness and develop technique, building up to manoeuvres like underwater rolls. All good practice for getting out on the sea when the lighter evenings arrive in April and junior and adult beginner and intermediate training courses start.

Keep an eye on our Facebook page for details of these and beginner sailing courses. New members welcome – membership covers kayaking, sailing and coastal rowing.

Ali Jeffrey

PORTOBELLO RUGBY IS ONE HUNDRED!

THIS season we celebrate Portobello Rugby's 100th Year! To mark this momentous occasion, we will be holding a number of events from Thursday 13th June to Sunday 16th June 2024 for members, friends and our wider community.

The flagship event is a massive party at our very own Portobello Town Hall on Saturday 15th June. Watch our social media for news on the weekend's events and information on how to get tickets to celebrate our centenary with us. **#ProudtobePorty**

Darren Crowther (Mini Convenor)

JOPPA TENNIS

OUR Annual General Meeting takes place on Wednesday 6th March at 7.00pm at the King's Manor Hotel. All members are warmly invited to come along to hear about what has been happening in the last year and also about exciting plans for the future of the club. Refreshments will be served. Looking forward to next season, our head coach Finn is planning his very popular Easter and summer tennis camps which are also open to non-members. The recommended age range is 4-16 years old. There are still a few places left, so book now to guarantee a slot. Easter camp runs from Monday 1st to Friday 5th April, from 1pm to 4.00pm. For more information, contact Finn on finnmcleantennis@gmail.com

Marjorie Shepherd

ANSWERS TO WHERE AM I?
1: Lights set into pavement near Aldi.
2: Tiled mural – near Tumbles, on the Prom.
3: Setts – Brighton Place. 4: Boardwalk – in Figgate Park