

THE Portobello REPORTER

Quarterly: Spring 2025
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The independent voice of Portobello Your Community Newspaper produced by local people since 1980

Carmen Chalmers and Sebastiaan Flurchard – co-founders of the new Porty Festival



PHOTO: PORTY FESTIVAL

FIRST COMMUNITY SHARE ISSUE IN PORTOBELLO

ACTION PARTY has been drawing up plans to develop the Celebration Hall in Bellfield to better meet the community demand for different sized spaces, and improve energy conservation and accessibility.

The first phase of the project will cost £780,000 and Action Party has been offered a grant of £450,000 from the UK Government's Community Ownership Fund (COF). However, the grant is conditional on being able to raise the balance of £330,000! Action Party has been speaking to various other funders, but we anticipate needing to raise between £100,000 and £200,000 by running a community share issue in April.

Community shares are an innovative way for local people to invest in what matters to them – in this case Bellfield. Action Party converted to a charitable Community Benefit Society (effectively a community co-operative) two years ago, to enable the

organisation to run a community share issue. The process involves producing a community share document which will set out the offer in detail.

Buying a community share is a withdrawable, non-transferrable investment which will provide vital capital for the development of Bellfield, and crucially help Action Party release this COF grant. A successful community issue will also demonstrate community support to other potential funders, as well as further strengthen the democratic control which the community has over Action Party.

Action Party had tremendous support when we acquired Bellfield on behalf of the community, and is relying on the community rising to this new challenge equally well. Check the Bellfield website for further information.

Ian Cooke

PORTY FESTIVAL

PREPARE yourselves for the Porty Festival this May as scores of events kick off in the community.

Friends and co-founders of the new festival, Carmen Chalmers, owner of Support The Makers (which hosts the makers markets at Portobello Town Hall), and Sebastiaan Flurchard, one of the owners of Seb's Urban Jungle, came up with the idea of the festival a while ago, but on Saturday 10th and Sunday 11th May it will become a reality.

Portobello Town Hall will be the hub for the festival, with food wagons, a gin bar, and events such as a disco, makers market, yoga and talks taking place inside. Porty Panto will be performing, as well as a magician, circus, DJs and live music through the day into the evening. Unity Hair on Portobello High Street will be transformed into a vintage clothing pop-up shop and the beach will host judo demonstrations, wild swimming workshops and a dog show.

Carmen said: "Portobello is a community passionate about supporting local businesses, with the festival providing an opportunity for people to be involved, from hosting the events, to small businesses, charities and community groups being sponsors, and of course the community coming together to support everything that makes Portobello what we love!"

For the full programme of events see www.portyfestival.co.uk

PHOTO: MATTHEW ASLETT

69 BUS ROUTE RETURNS

THE 69 bus service is back. Reinstated by popular demand, the circular route via Lady Nairne, Bingham, Portobello High Street, Moira Park, Northfield, Willowbrae Road and Paisley Avenue passes several schools, libraries, supermarkets, GP surgeries and pharmacies. The bus used on the route carries 15 passengers and is fully accessible for wheelchair users. Note that the service operates on a hail-and-ride basis, where there are no formal bus stops. Just put your hand out when you see the bus and the driver will stop when it is safe to do so. Fares are £2 for adults and £1 for children. Concessionary bus pass holders travel for free. See www.hcltransport.org.uk



PORTY PROFILE No. 91

ROSE WHITE



PHOTO: PATRICIA SCOTLAND

ROSE has been the Project Organiser for the Portobello Older People's Project (POPP) for the past 10 years. She is regularly spotted outside the Baptist Church on the High Street on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings, ready to meet members arriving off the bus for the lunch and social club held in the Church Hall.

POPP's clientele are isolated older people living locally, who are offered the opportunity to get out of their homes, share a meal and enjoy the company of others, with a varied programme of activities, such as quizzes, games, entertainers and outings.

Rose was born and brought up in Clydebank. She trained as a nurse in Glasgow before moving to Edinburgh where she specialised in orthopaedics. In 1999 she moved into NHS management and was involved in the early planning of the new Royal Hospital for Children and Young People. In 2010 she decided to leave the NHS so she could spend more time looking after her newly-adopted son, but when he started school, she was keen to get a part-time job. POPP fitted the bill perfectly.

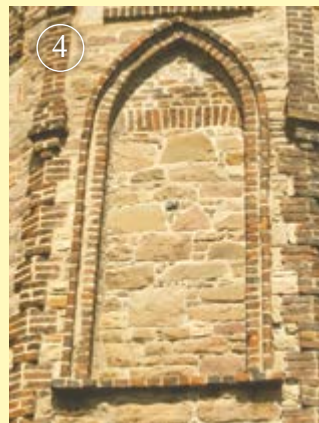
Rose has witnessed some changes in POPP over the time she's been at the helm. She says: "The need to support isolated older people remains as important as when POPP was founded more than 30 years ago. But the financial climate is definitely more difficult and it's a continual struggle to find the resources to keep going".

She also stresses the significant impact of Covid-19 and its lingering effects: "It was a very hard time for our members, some of whom lost loved ones and have struggled to regain their confidence since".

With a heavy heart, Rose has decided to retire in June. But after dedicating her time and energy to POPP for a decade, she now wants to spend more time with her family and cultivating her cut-flower garden and her vegetable beds.

Patricia Scotland

WHERE AM I?



PHOTOS: ANDREW MYLNE

Where in Portobello can these blocked up windows be found? Answers on page eight.

What's On

BLOOD DONATION: Portobello Town Hall, Thurs 18 March, 2-4pm/5.30-7.30pm. Book appts on **0345 90 90 999** (Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm), by email: **nss.snbtsequiry@nhs.scot** (both by 5pm the previous day), or online up to 14hrs before session.

PORTOBELLO HERITAGE TRUST AGM: Tues 15th April, 7.30pm, Celebration Hall, Bellfield, Bellfield St. With a speaker from Edinburgh Lothian & Borders Police Historical Society.

PORTOBELLO MARKET: 1st Sat. of the month, 9.30-1.30. Brighton Park. **portobello.market@live.co.uk**

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

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

WALKING FOR HEALTH: One hour low-level walks – free, social and open to all. 1pm Mondays. Start and finish at Chest, Heart & Stroke shop, 113 Portobello High St. Before attending, call Fearghas on **07821 681982** or email **walking@chss.org.uk**

COMMUNITY CHOIR: Wed evenings, 7.30-9.15pm, small hall at Baptist Church, 189 Portobello High St. See **www.portobellocommunitychoir.org**

CHAMBER MUSIC GROUP: Sundays, 2pm, Baptist Church Hall. For details see **www.meetup.com/portobello-music-group**

TINDERBOX MUSIC CLUB: Weds 4.30-6pm for ages P5-S1, Portobello Library. For all young musicians who can confidently play four notes or more on any instrument and those who'd like to learn.

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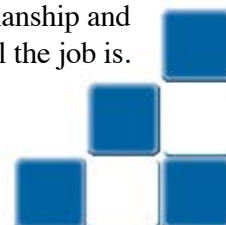
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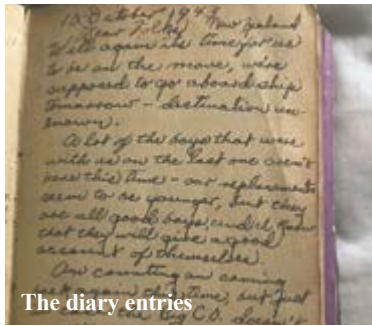
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LOST BIBLE RETURNED

ST COLUMBA'S Portobello charity shop volunteer Adam was surprised to find a donated bible that once belonged to David Shanley, a soldier from Baltimore, containing diary entries detailing his life on the battlefield. Adam started to do some research to return it to David's family. Finding his service number on a military database unlocked a wealth of information. Adam said: "He fought in World War II, Korea, Vietnam and became a police officer in California. He was made a first lieutenant at 21 years old, was a major fighter in the battle of Guadalcanal and received the Award for Heroism during Saipan."



The diary entries

Eventually Adam located David's nephew Michael in Oregon and rang him. Adam said: "He became emotional and burst into tears – he was very close with his uncle Dave and looked after him as he became older. I popped the diary in the post, and two weeks later it arrived back where it rightfully should be, with David Shanley's family."

Alan says how the bible ended up in Portobello in the first place remains a mystery, so if any of our Reporter readers know, we would be interested in hearing from them.

Karen Combe

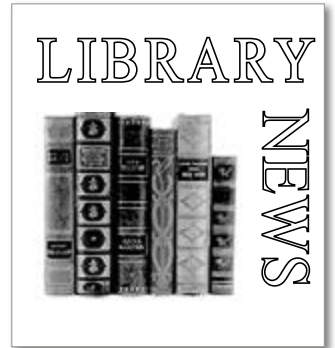
WE ARE delighted to be hosting an Open Book shared reading group at 11am on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month from 6th March. Open Book groups meet in a relaxed, easy-going environment to read and discuss stories and poems; all books are provided by Open Book. We love this idea and think libraries are a great place to host a group like this. If you would enjoy reading and chatting about books with like-minded people, why not drop in to one of the Open Book Sessions.

Evelyn Newman will be visiting us on Tuesday 18th March to talk about her book *Life Beyond the Waistline: The Expanding Role of an NHS Dietitian*. Local author Grahame Howard will be launching two new books here on Tuesday 25th March: *A Girl Called Crocker* and *Seeking Fleur* complete the Andy Norris Trilogy, centred around the misadventures of ambition-free layabout Andy Norris. Tickets for both events are available free from the library.

Pain Concern holds drop-in sessions in the library from 11am to 1pm on the last Tuesday of the month. They work to improve the lives of people living with pain and those who care for them. If you suffer from chronic pain or care for someone who does, drop in for a chat with them for advice and support.

For up-to-date information on what's going on in the library ask a staff member or follow us at www.facebook.com/PortobelloLibrary

Paul Hudson



Private & Duet Pilates Sessions take place at the Pilates Studio.

Please visit our website for more information on Private & Group sessions.

Class Timetable (Virtual/In Person):

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

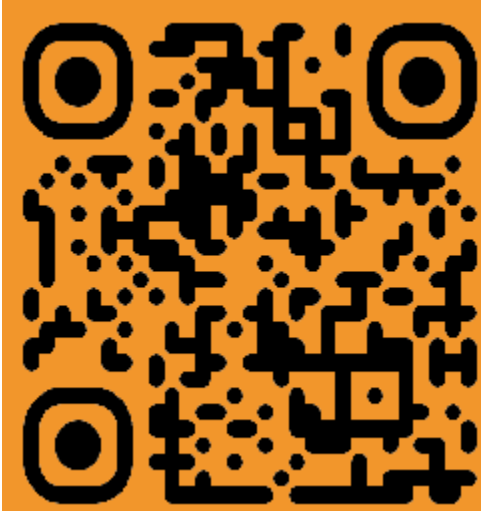
Magic Circle Pilates Workshops(In-Person & Online) 2025:

Fri. - 9:30-10:15am - 14th Mar. / 4th Apr. / 2nd May

Trigger Point Pilates Workshops (In-Person & Online) 2025:

Sat. - 9:30-10:30am - 29th Mar. / 26th Apr. / 31st May

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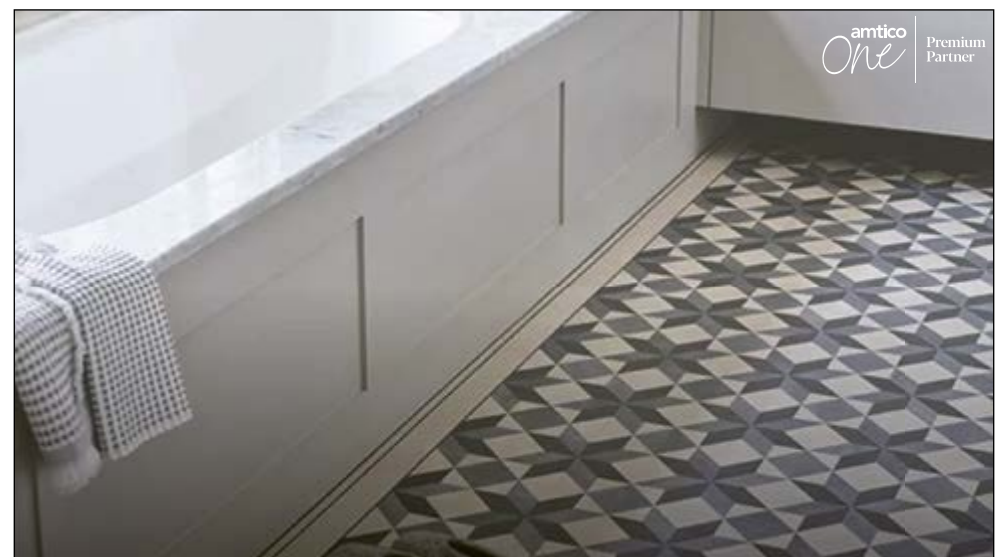
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NOW that spring is here, get your seeds growing. If you've bought compost, warm it up a little before sowing; I bring a bag of my own compost into the greenhouse the month before. Do the same outside, covering the soil with weighted-down black plastic or cardboard for a while before sowing, or planting young plants, in April.

A mistake I've made is not hardening off plants so that their leaves are tougher and can cope with a bit of slug or cold damage. I now tend to harden off seedlings on a table first, out of the way of slugs and snails for a week or so, then I move them to ground level for another week before planting out. It's a bit of a faff, but worth the effort. I also keep old net curtains to throw over if frost is threatened; once into June they're put away for next year.

New gardeners, look after your soil. It's very precious, so instead of artificial fertilisers, use homemade nettle or comfrey liquid. No herbicides either – weed instead; no fungicides – try milk sprayed onto leaves, and no pesticides – just let nature get a grip.

IN JANUARY, more than 80 people, including children, took part in a wassail at the community orchard to bless the apple trees and encourage a bountiful harvest later in the year.

There was a bonfire, hot spiced apple juice and singing, ably led by Jane Lewis and the Portobello Community Choir. What started as an example of localising food production has sparked other projects such as the Neighbouring Orchard, enthusing people to grow what they want to eat. In an urban area we cannot become self-sufficient in food production, but there is great satisfaction in growing even a little food. The orchard also got a mention recently on Radio 4, by a contributor to *Gardeners' Question Time*.

Portobello is regarded as a sustainable community, with the Community Council held up as an exemplar. However, the last Community Council dwindled to just five members, so new enthusiasm and ideas are now required. There are so many other groups in the area, ranging from those managing large community-owned venues to a small group in the Brighton Place area looking at combined repairs. This means resources are thinly spread, but all these groups sustain our vibrant community. Why not join in?



NEWS IN BRIEF

PHOTOS WANTED. If anyone has photographs of events organised by The Joppa Kids, please contact the Portobello Reporter at portyrep@gmail.com

P O R T O B E L L O C O M M U N I T Y C O U N C I L. For information on the outcome of the recent Edinburgh community council elections, see www.edinburgh.gov.uk.

LOCAL TOILETS. City of Edinburgh Council will not provide funding for additional toilets in Portobello before the summer, leading to concerns that people will once again make use of the streets and gardens.

PORTOBELLO HIGH SCHOOL

FROM stonemasonry and roofing to silversmithing and beauty therapy, Portobello High School (PHS) is skilling up the tradespeople of the future with the introduction of a new range of courses for its young people. The Agile Pathways initiative aims to increase student engagement, improve attendance and create positive and sustainable career paths, well after they've left their school years behind.



the café provide hands-on experience of the hospitality industry, learning skills in food preparation, customer service and business operations, it will hopefully become a place where students feel a real sense of what they have, and can, achieve.

Depute Head Luke McAllister said: "Our commitment to Agile Pathways ensures that our young people stay in school, developing real-world experience, practical

skills and the confidence to take on their future careers. Portobello High School remains dedicated to innovation in education, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to thrive and succeed."

IF YOU own a listed building or a property in a conservation area, a University of Edinburgh/City of Edinburgh Council project 'Giving Voice to Historic Property Owners' may be of interest. It aims to improve the clarity and accessibility of the relevant planning guidance. See <https://edin.ac/3VnU6Ls> for details.

ART Walk Project's funding has been secured for three years (2025-28) as part of Creative Scotland's Multi-Year Funding Portfolio.

PORTY Community Energy launched a 'Travel Agents of Change' project last November to find the best stories of flight-free holidays from Edinburgh. More than 60 entries were received and the best stories have been published in a zine, along with tips for taking a sustainable holiday. Find out more at www.portycommunityenergy.wordpress.com/travel-agents-of-change

PHOTO: COLIN HATTERSLEY

Also soon to be on offer is an in-house café which will be staffed and managed by students. The newly rebranded Crew Café has been brought to life by our very own PHS interior designer, Luke Ingrey-Counter who is in S6. Not only will

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HISTORY OF PORTOBELLO BY MARGARET MUNRO

BURNS CLUB



Sir Harry Lauder (in kilt), attends the Portobello Burns Club in 1931

PORTOBELLO Burns Club was instituted on 25th January 1892 and, in common with most clubs at that time, was a male only membership. The resolution to establish a club included "... the commemorating of Burns' birthday and the encouraging of the study of Scottish poetry ... this might be done by offering prizes to the children of the Burgh Schools for essays on Scottish poetry." By January 1893, 45 gentlemen had joined the club. Twelve prizes for knowledge of Burns' writing had been awarded to Portobello schools and were much appreciated by those receiving them. It was hoped more prizes would be awarded in the future and, indeed, the practice continued for many years.

One of the most significant Burns suppers must have

been that held on Monday, 26th January, 1931, in Portobello Town Hall. Sir Harry Lauder attended and gave The Immortal Memory. The Reply to The Lasses was given by The Lady Margaret Sackville, a well-known society figure of the time. In the photograph The Lady Margaret is seated on the right of the front row with Sir Harry, resplendent in his kilt, standing on her right.

When he rose to speak, Sir Harry was given a standing ovation, followed by a rendition of *For He's a Jolly Good Fellow*. The evening was described in the minute book as an "... epoch marking event..." with over 300 attending and ladies present for the first time. It further recorded that: "... his eulogy of the Poet was distinguished by its freshness of outlook and fervour of

expression." According to newspaper reports of the time, Sir Harry described Burns as: "A builder of song! A song that lives and grows and never dies ... Burns shows the world a true genius and we are all proud of him ... Burns left behind him an everlasting bond of friendship among Scotsmen the world over" and "he speaks the language of the human soul."

The Club was recently wound up and the minute books and various artefacts were given into the care of Portobello Heritage Trust. The last recorded minute is dated 29th November, 1993. Burns Suppers were held by the club after this but are not recorded. The minute books provide a fascinating and valuable insight into the history of the club and Portobello society.

PHOTO: COURTESY THE SCOTSMAN

EDINBURGH DOG AND CAT HOME

AS DAFFODILS and snowdrops start blooming, it's nice to fill our homes with spring flowers, but did you know that many of them are toxic to cats?

Lilies, daffodils and tulips are all poisonous to cats, so be careful about keeping them in your home. If your feline friend is a nibbler, you might want to opt for safe flowers like

freesias or roses.

Symptoms of poisoning include salivating and vomiting, but cats are good at hiding pain, so if you think they've ingested poison, call your vet immediately. Find out more about dealing with cat emergencies at www.edch.org.uk/cat-first-aid.

Betty Henderson



THE Wash House in Adelphi Grove is a hidden gem with fun and accessible activities on offer and a great space for community gatherings.

The Wash House hosts many regular activities that encourage and support health, wellbeing and lifelong learning for the benefit of the local community. Sign up to our new monthly e-newsletter at www.thewashhouse.org/subscribe to receive the latest about community groups, events, gigs and news. See the website to hire our community spaces www.thewashhouse.org/about-our-spaces.

Lindsay Perth

PORTOBELLO TOWN HALL

2025 got off to a flying start with the town hall being a selected venue for Edinburgh's Hogmanay New Year's Day events. A free family-friendly ceilidh in the afternoon provided a wonderful welcome for young and old to our revitalised local venue. That evening saw Vitamin C Club transforming the space for live bands and DJ sets.

In February, we welcomed the return of Stage Door with the junior version of popular Disney musical *Frozen*. March sees award winning comedian Gary Meikle here as well as The Big Comedy Roadshow. Further ahead we're excited to host the brand-new Porty Festival as well as Imagineate, the Edinburgh Children's Festival. But there's so much more, so visit our website to find out what's happening at www.portbellotownhall.org.

Wendy Davies

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AMNESTY – LOCAL NEWS

PORTOBELLO Amnesty International Group will hold its popular annual book sale and coffee morning on Saturday, 12th April at Bellfield Community Hub, between 10am and noon. Hoping to break last year's record of over £1,000, the event offers books, baking, bric-a-brac and artworks. (Those wishing to donate books should contact Jim Gilchrist at gilchrist767@btinternet.com).

Meanwhile, ongoing group activity elicited a heartening response when pupils wrote 187 cards of support to political prisoners in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Angola during the branch's Christmas 'Write For Rights' exercise at Portobello High School.

The group continues to support AI's unconditional opposition to the death penalty and is currently focusing on Alabama, USA, where six executions were carried out during 2024, the highest total for any US state. November alone saw five executions in the US within a week.

More than 70 per cent of countries worldwide no longer execute and that number is growing. AI believes the death penalty should have no place in a civilised society.

(Contact: Theresa.mcmurtry@gmail.com)

Jim Gilchrist



TRIBE Talks are free events open to the general public, offering light refreshments and opportunities to connect. These talks aim to inspire, spark meaningful conversations, and educate our community to grow and thrive. Our current series focuses on Women's Wellbeing and includes:

- 6th March: International Women's Day collage workshop – Postcards to Ourselves
- 24th April: Writing for Wellbeing workshop
- 15th May: Love Yourself in Every Way.

Tribe Talks are held at Tribe Porty from 6-7.30pm. Please reserve your space and find out more by visiting www.tribeporty.org.

Alice Hudson



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ACTION PARTY

ACTION Party and Grassroots to Global were joined by Party Community Energy in running a second HeartTalk Party event in the library on 23rd November last year. The first HeartTalk in 2021 led to the community fridge, a toddlers' play group, Screen Party and further community engagement on Seafield and sustainable transport. The meeting in November 2024 considered four conversations suggested by local people. One was Action Party's proposal to consider bringing the police station into community ownership. Police Scotland is considering our request and will let us know by 3rd July. The other three conversations have all led to groups forming. These are focused on community food growing and meals, on rewilding the beach and calming sea storms, and on twinning Portobello with a community in Palestine.

Justin Kenrick

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Spring flowers planted by Portobello Amenity Society in Abercorn Park



PHOTO: ANDREW MYLINE

SEAFIELD CONSULTATION

THE City of Edinburgh Council is inviting people to share their views on the regeneration of Seafield into a new environmentally friendly neighbourhood. The plans for this narrow stretch of land include as many as 2,700 new homes, with 35 per cent affordable, to address the city's housing emergency. They also include a new promenade, a GP surgery and opportunities for new shops and workplaces.

Future residents will also benefit from the provision of a heat network, which will help keep energy bills down.

The consultation closes on 30th April and people can take part in an online survey at www.bit.ly/seafieldconsult or attend a drop-in session to discuss the plans at:

Portobello Library, 14 Rosefield Avenue, Saturday 8th March, 10.30-1.30.

Leith Library, 28-30 Ferry Road, Friday 21st March, 12.30-3.30.

Craigentiny Community Centre, 9 Loaning Road, Saturday 22nd March, 10.30-1.30.

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IN THE SADDLE



PHOTO: PORTOVELO

NOW that spring has arrived, Portovelo Sunday rides have returned to their normal start-time of 8am. During the darkest days of winter we started at 9am and mostly stuck to shorter routes in East Lothian – and there were a few days when the risk of ice confined us to low-lying main roads. The extra hour and warmer weather means we can range further afield and onto higher ground.

We're continuing to offer shorter taster rides on the first Sunday of each month – ideal for anyone wanting to try out a group ride without committing to the full distance immediately. There's also a Wednesday morning social ride and gravel rides every second Saturday. All our rides are free to join. New members are always welcome.

Looking ahead, we have booked rooms at Oban Youth Hostel for our annual weekender from 20th to 22nd June. This should involve a circuit of Mull on the Saturday, plus a shorter Sunday morning ride inland to Loch Awe. For more information on all our activities check our website, www.porto-velo.com.

Andrew Mylne

JOPPA TENNIS

THE 2025/26 season starts at the beginning of April and new members are always welcome. For membership enquiries email joppatc@hotmail.com. Our junior teams did very well over the winter leagues, narrowly losing to Thistle Tennis Club in a nail-biting final.

Bookings for the popular Easter and summer camps are now open to members and non-members alike. These sessions run for three hours a day over five days and cover learning skills, technique and tactics, as well as coordination games and team challenges, all wrapped up in a fun package and delivered by our head coach, Finn and three other qualified coaches. For more information and how to book a slot, contact Finn on finnmcleantennis@gmail.com.

Finally it is worth highlighting that we have a public access defibrillator on the outside wall of the clubhouse. Anyone can use it and you do not need training. Once you turn it on it will give clear step-by-step voice instructions on what to do until an ambulance arrives.

Marjie Shepherd

BOWLING CENTENARY

BOWLERS from Portobello, Jessfield, Craigentiny, LRF Parker Road, Willowbrae and Postal among others will help Brunstane Bowling Club celebrate its centenary later this year. The Joppa club, founded in 1925 by railway workers from the extensive Portobello marshalling yards, will entertain friendly rivals in a series of celebratory matches on Saturdays throughout the month of June at its Brunstane Road base.

The club, which began life in a converted railway carriage, now boasts a modern clubhouse, a well-respected bowling green and runs thriving men's, ladies' and seniors' sections, competing in several, Edinburgh-wide leagues.

What is hoped will be a lively series of celebrations to mark a major milestone in the history of this local organisation will be brought to a fitting conclusion with a Gala Supper Dance in Musselburgh in the Autumn.

George Mackay

RUGBY

PORTOBELLO Rugby Club will be open for all Scotland games during the Six Nations 2025, creating a lively hub for fans to cheer on the national team. Non-members are welcome and details of opening times can be found on our social channels.

The club is also assisting with the launch of Portobello Youth Rugby Academy aimed at supporting the growth of rugby among high school-age players. This initiative promises to nurture young talent, strengthening ties between the club and local schools.

Meanwhile, the men's team continues a strong season, with an impressive run of victories showcasing their hard work and skill. The junior rugby section also thrives, with growing numbers and promising talent ensuring a bright future for Portobello Rugby Club.

Get in touch for information via our social channels [#proudtobeparty](https://www.instagram.com/proudtobeparty)

Darren Crowther (Youth Convenor)

BOWLER JESSICA UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT AGAIN



PHOTO: GEORGE MACKAY

JESSICA Young was featured in the 2023 Portobello Reporter when she was crowned Junior Champion at Brunstane Bowling Club for the second year running. Now in her 5th year at Portobello High School, she has been chosen to represent Scotland internationally at bowls at under 17 level –

the only representative from Edinburgh. She plays locally at Dalkeith indoor bowling club. Well done, Jessica!

SWIMMING

PORTOBELLO Amateur Swimming Club's annual awards and ceilidh in January was a fantastic night of celebration and dancing. In swimming, it's been a busy start to the year with three competitions already under the belt, including one round of District Championships. Despite the early season, when fitness levels are lower, swimmers have achieved many lifetime bests and a handful of district finals. There are two further rounds of Districts before Nationals in April.

In water polo, the U19 Boys won the BMC Cup for the second year running, with Portobello players winning top goal scorer and best goalkeeper. The same weekend, the U14 Mixed team won the BMC Championship. The Scottish leagues are underway, and a number of our players have recently been selected for National Development Squads at all levels.

For membership enquiries, please contact portyascmembership@gmail.com

Lucy Scott-Watson



PHOTO: PSKC

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