

THE Portobello REPORTER

Quarterly: Winter 2023
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The independent voice of Portobello

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PHOTOS: ANDREW MYLNE

PUSHING BACK THE TIDE

TONS of sand were washed from Portobello beach and the sea wall severely damaged in the violent storm in October, as can be seen in these photographs. The gabion groyne (rocks enclosed in a cage) at the east end was also partly destroyed. This is not the first time the beach has been depleted, however.

Some levelling of the sand from east to west was carried out in 1979, then in the spring of 1988, Lothian Regional Council spent £250,000 putting back the sand that had been washed away from the beach in the previous few years. Dredgers took 40,000-50,000 cubic metres from the Firth at Fisherrow and pumped it onto the beach at Joppa.

The sand at the east end of Portobello beach was again severely depleted in the storms of March 2010, and thousands of tons were moved east from the west end and middle of the beach to replace it in early 2011. The gabion groyne was partly demolished by storms then as well.

FIGHT TO SAVE THE GEORGE GOES ON

A **PROPOSAL** by its owner to delist the George Cinema was rejected by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) in October. HES decided that the building remains of special architectural interest and reported that there is no statutory change to the listing. HES maintain that the building is a rare example of an Art Deco style cinema, designed by a significant Scottish cinema designer, T Bowhill Gibson, and is a prominent Portobello landmark with social and historical significance. Its current owner says that the building is unsafe due to asbestos, alterations have limited its architectural interest and it doesn't make a positive contribution to the appearance of the street.

Friends of The George (FoTG) attempted to buy the building with funds from an anonymous benefactor. However, the offer was rejected by its current owners who have failed to get permission to partially demolish the building and build private flats. FoTG Chair Mikey Davidson says: "We were naturally disappointed to have our offer rejected. It is sad to see the continued dilapidation of The George. Our aim remains to try and purchase the building and to restore it as a community asset, in line with the Vision we've outlined so we will continue to look at how this may be achieved."

The group has secured funding from The Scottish Land Fund to engage a community cinema consultancy. It is also planning an exhibition about the building in 2024, and contributions of photographs, artworks and memories (images as JPEG or PNG) can be emailed to hello@thegeorge.org.uk

PORTY PROFILE No. 86

JUSTIN KENRICK



PHOTO: JON DAVEY

WHEN I interview Justin Kenrick for this article, he is about to travel to Kenya to spend a few weeks on the forested slopes of Mount Elgon with the nomadic Ogiek people, as part of his work supporting communities to regain their right to community lands. A trained anthropologist, Justin is passionate about communities and about finding ways to help people value each other and work through their differences.

Brought up first on Iona and then in Notting Hill, where his parents founded Shelter, Justin moved to Edinburgh in 1987 and, with his partner Eva Schonveld, to Portobello in 1998, where their three sons went to Towerbank and Portobello High School. He and Eva have contributed to various initiatives to build local resilience and improve sustainability. Justin is particularly proud of his role in Action Porty, set up to bring the community together and to bring the disused church at Bellfield back into use through the first urban community buy-out in Scotland. This has now become financially self-supporting and is in heavy demand. Justin is confident that its success can be replicated by the Town Hall and other projects: in his view reclaiming community spaces helps build healthy communities, and this in turn creates more demand for community spaces.

As a Quaker, with a strong commitment to peaceful direct action, Justin has been arrested and even imprisoned for his stance against nuclear weapons and against weak government action on climate change. He believes that the best hope for tackling the multiple social and environmental crises we currently face lies in empowered local communities using participative democracy and assemblies to build from the local to the national level. Portobello's strong sense of itself as a community is one of the things he most likes about living here. He also loves living by the sea, and the exposure that brings to the restorative power of a storm.

Andrew Mylne



ALLOTMENTS CENTENARY

CRAIGENTINNY Telferton Allotments celebrated their Centenary earlier this year. They were founded in 1923 on land rented from Edinburgh Corporation Electricity Service and some people have been members for 20-40 years. The plots are fully occupied, including a community plot and charities' plots. Local people may remember attempts by property developers to build houses on the site, and many joined us to defend its use.

We had a record attendance at our Annual Open Day in July. The *Centenary Cookbook* was on sale, created by the Working Group in partnership with Porty Art Walk Artists-in-Residence. It features plot holders' recipes with illustrations made at plant printing workshops, and snippets of history about our site.

Our members' barbecue a month later included a Gardeners' Question Time with local horticultural 'celebrity' Susan Burns.

Rona Gray

What's On

CINDERELLA The **Pantomime:** Tues 28th Nov-Sat 30th Dec, Portobello Town Hall. Tickets and information from www.portypanto.com or 0131 314 2841.

PORTOBELLO MARKET: First 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. parkrun.org.uk/portobello

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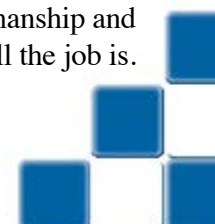
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Portobello BikeFest returned on Saturday the 16th September. Bath Street and Mentone Avenue were closed to allow visitors to try out the different bikes on display. There were recumbant bicycles, side-by-side tandems and cargo bikes along with numerous stallholders.

WE WOULD like to give big congratulations and thanks to the organisers of the 2023 Portobello Book Festival for delivering another great weekend of quality and superb events creating a wonderful atmosphere in the library.

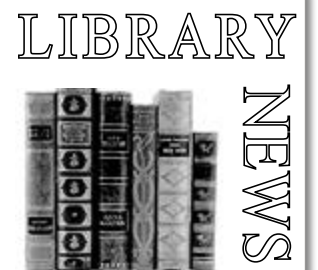
As a warm and welcoming space, we are providing free hot drinks to customers during the winter on Wednesday evenings and Thursday mornings. Why not come down and join us for a coffee (or tea) and chat on those cold winter days?


Will from Volunteer Edinburgh will be visiting us on Mondays 4th and 15th December from 2pm to 4pm. If you are interested in volunteering, or want to find out more information, come and have a chat with Will.

We would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year when it comes. We will have Christmas and winter themed activities for children over the holiday season, so keep an eye out for information in the library and on our social media. We will not be running Bookbug on Wednesdays 27th December or 3rd January, but will continue with our Saturday Bookbug, Friday Crafts and Lego as usual. Also, our Book Group will not meet on the first Monday of January, but on Monday 8th January instead. The January book will be *In The Name of the Family* by Sarah Dunant.

For updates on what's going on in the library you can follow us on Facebook and X (formerly Twitter).

Paul Hudson







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Magic Circle Pilates (Virtual) 2023/24:

<p>Fridays 9:30-10:15am</p>	<p>8th Dec'23</p>	<p>12th Jan'24</p>	<p>9th Feb'24</p>
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Trigger Point Pilates (Virtual/Live) 2024:

<p>Saturday 9:30-10:30am</p>	<p>27th Jan'24</p>	<p>24th Feb'24</p>	<p>30th Mar'24</p>
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GET SEED catalogues and order what you need before the Spring rush. Get your old favourites – mine are tomatoes, kale and rocket – but try something new too. My choice this year is a shrub, Chilean Guava, with lovely tasting berries. You don’t get a lot, but they are worth it.

I start chitting potatoes, sow sweetpeas and tomatoes, and start dahlias into growth, all in February. With a bit of planning, this could be done on a windowsill. I use growlights, and find them very useful and cheap to run.

Emptying the compost heap is an annual ritual. The good crumbly stuff is used for growing tomatoes, the rougher stuff as a mulch on the vegetable beds or anything newly planted.

Compost is a crop from the garden and so are leaves. Rake up as many as possible, put in plastic bags – I’ve re-used ours for years – and a year later they can be used as a mulch or added to compost.

Check any stored fruit or vegetables. Any rotten fruit can be thrown out for birds on frosty days.

Split snowdrops. The benefit is you can see exactly where you want to put them, with almost instant impact.

A L T H O U G H many apples in the Donkeyfield Community Orchard had already been taken, we were able to gather enough for a very successful and joyous

Apple Day. There were several varieties for tasting and sale, cakes, teas, games and the ever-popular juice pressing which was fascinating for the kids who came. More than 100 people enjoyed a fine afternoon and the fire provided a great opportunity for toasting marshmallows as well as being a focal point for those chatting and keeping warm.

With winter now upon us, many have difficulty in keeping their houses warm. The climate crisis has raised average temperatures resulting in greater energy in the oceans, thereby creating fiercer storms. The first and easiest wins for energy efficiency in our homes is to draught-proof windows and doors followed by roof insulation. These are critical elements to address before any of the more expensive items such as new boilers, air-source heat pumps or solar panels. The latter do nothing to increase energy efficiency.

The Scottish Government can provide help with a grant or interest-free loan to carry out energy saving improvements. The scheme is operated by Home Energy Scotland and more information can be found on its website or by phoning **0808 808 2282**.

SUSTAINABLE PORTY

by Stephen Hawkins

PORTY PENNYPINCHER

AS WINTER closes in, thoughts turn to fuel bills and the cost of heating your home.

If you have central heating, do you have thermostatic valves fitted to all the radiators? If you don’t, consider fitting them as they could save you money in the long term. You can turn them to low or off in rooms you don’t use very often and reduce the strain on your boiler too.

If you have draughty sash and case windows, it’s worth thinking about secondary glazing. The technology has moved on and the systems are almost invisible when fitted. It’s less expensive and invasive than installing new ones and you will feel the benefits immediately.

Heavy, thermal lined curtains can also be a good investment as these will help keep the heat in and the draughts out.

Do you have an open fireplace you don’t use? Any heat in the house will be going right up the chimney, so invest in a chimney draught excluder. There are inflatable versions for around £20 or wool options for slightly more.

PORTOBELLO ROTARY CLUB ANNIVERSARY

PORTOBELLO Rotary Club will celebrate its 70th anniversary in 2024. It’s one of more than 35,000 clubs, with more than 1.2 million members in over 200 countries.

The Club is open to anyone – it’s not just for a select few – and it’s keen to have new members. If you are interested, please email rotaryclubofportobello@gmail.com or see the Facebook page for more information.

TIMEBANK IS TEN

FOLLOWING the AGM on 7th October, Portobello Timebank celebrated its 10th anniversary with a ‘pot luck’ dinner. Everyone brought a dish and it worked amazingly well, helped by some impressive cooking! With the bunting up and a few drinks under our belts we moved onto the ‘speed date’, getting to know new members to strengthen the Timebank network and, importantly, to initiate all-important time ‘swaps’. See: www.portobellotimebank.co.uk

James Carver

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FROM THE ARCHIVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

WHEN you walk past 189 Portobello High Street, what do you see? An elegant Victorian building; a frontage aching for the return of its town clock; an old cinema or Portobello's first town hall? Perhaps you recall the Citizens' Advice Bureau or Marshalls, which, I'm told, sold the most fashionable shoes in town. Look above the old shop windows and you read 'Portobello Baptist Church' (PBC). Yes, a church owns this lovely building in the heart of Portobello.

The church's history started on 29th November 1891 when Pastor Tait began meetings in an ice cream shop at 251 Portobello High Street. He was joined by Rev John Boyd Wallace and Mrs Susan Cleghorn, a ladies' nurse. The church met in many places, until in 1911, it bought Stanley House, Stanley Street.

During World War One, Pastor Walker, a chaplain, welcomed so many troops that Stanley House became too cramped. So, they hired the new town hall for Sunday evening services. As many as 1,000 came and it was standing room only. After the war, the church moved into the first town hall. In 1895 they met in a single room there. By 1919, they owned the whole building. What an undertaking.

Since then, thousands have passed through the doors. In 1939, the old cinema box was dismantled for scrap metal as PBC did



its bit for the war effort. The church hall became a Casualty Bureau. By the 1980s, the Monday Club began in the hall and today the frail elderly still meet there. Each Saturday, the hall hosts the Community Fridge and Foodbank. Times change and the shop has been a café, Warm Spaces place, an Artwalk Porty Hub and now the afternoon 'Meeting Place' (Tuesdays) and 'Jigsew' (Wednesdays) where extraordinarily tricky puzzles and sewing projects are tackled.

Most of all, PBC has never tired of telling the Good News that the Lord Jesus came to save us from

our sins and bring us into God's family. That message has been preached from the ice cream shop to the first town hall. Open air meetings were held on the beach and Tent meetings carried on for years around the town. Summer fun by the sea and carols on the sands have all given the same message of God's love.

When you next walk past the church, why not pop in to find out more. But behave, or you could be sent down to the police cells in the basement and be locked in for the night like naughty Portobello folk in the 1860s.

Jenny Duncan

PHOTO: CHRISTINE HOY



Author Jake King, Bill Jameson and Annabel Meikle at a whisky tasting event

BOOK FESTIVAL SUCCESS

THE 15th Book Festival was a resounding success despite the wintry weather.

Between the 5th and 8th of October nearly 2,000 people attended 26 events, 23 in Portobello Library and one each in the Portobello Bookshop, Jameson Gate and the Wash House, and we had a lot of positive feedback.

We always try to ensure, as far as possible, that local people see their own experiences and interests reflected in the programme, and nearly half of this year's events had a local connection. We also try to include a mix of subjects, writers, commentators and readers.

The Portobello Town Hall team supported us with the loan of chairs, and the Portobello Bookshop set up a stall in the library for the sale of the books of all contributing authors.

Special thanks to the library for the goodwill and dedication of the staff and all they contribute to the success of the festival.

If you have ideas for next year, please contact us via our website at www.portobellobookfestival.com.

Bill Jameson

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BRUNSTANE/COILLESDENE TRAFFIC

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



THE Wash House is almost back to pre-pandemic income level. Screen Porty is using the space and feedback from new audiences is very positive.

We are hoping that we will have a council youth worker to run regular youth sessions in the coming months.

We would like to get the garden flourishing and are looking for volunteers. To help, please get in touch.

‘Drawing with Nature, Painting with Plants’ with environmental artist Barbara Middleton starts up soon.

For all information please go to our website www.thewashhouse.org.

Gica Loening

PORTOBELLO CENTRAL

WHETHER you step into Portobello Town Hall for *Cinderella*, a party, an exercise class, or art class, you will be welcomed by a fresh foyer and the visible signs of building redevelopment. We are keeping the historical integrity of the building while creating a modern community events space.

In October, we said goodbye and thank you to founder members Jennifer Elliot and Geoff Pearson. Both have done an immeasurable amount of work and are already missed. We welcomed Fiona, Federica, Colin and Lawrence to the board, bringing enthusiasm and new skills and showing their care and experience from day one.

Looking forward to 2024, we will be holding an open event in January to seek views on the use of our outdoor space. Need a fabulous venue at the seaside? Look no further.

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AMNESTY – LOCAL NEWS


AMNESTY International’s local group held an event at October’s Portobello Book Festival in association with the People’s Consulate of Belarus in Scotland. The book was *The Zekameron: One Hundred Tales from Behind Bars*, a stark yet witty account of life in prison by the Belarusian lawyer Maxim Znak, serving 10 years for investigating electoral violations in a country where freedom of expression and assembly remain brutally curtailed.

Despite heavy rainfall, 50 doughty visitors to our October Portobello Market stall signed a petition on behalf of Abbas Deris, sentenced to death in Iran, while November, Islamophobia Awareness Month, saw the stall invite debate on the human right to follow a religion.

As we watch appalled at the intensifying humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, Amnesty has been agitating for immediate ceasefire by all parties to halt the horrifying civilian casualties and to enable aid agencies to get urgently required supplies into the area, as well as for the release of all civilian hostages. Amid such catastrophic events, our voices may seem insignificant, but remember AI’s founding slogan: it is better to light a candle than curse the darkness.

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



IN ADDITION to providing flexible work and co-working spaces, Tribe Party offers unique and affordable event space for all different kinds of activities which could be ongoing or one-offs.

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Alice Hudson



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SCREEN PORTY

SCREEN Porty Community Cinema delighted audiences with a weekend of films in October at the Wash House, and there are more to come. Audience feedback included: “Loved it! Will definitely be back for whatever the next screening is!”, “This is a great asset for Porty” and “what a beautiful film and a great atmosphere as well”.

More on Screen Porty events at: www.screenporty.org/subscribe, www.facebook.com/groups/screenporty or www.instagram.com/screenporty

ACTION PORTY

AT OUR recent AGM, Board member Morag Donaldson highlighted the importance of volunteers to Bellfield, our increased administrative capacity and the success of the Friday café. Dave Cooper outlined how Porty Community Fridge emerged from HeartTalk Porty in 2021 as a community response to supermarket food waste (400kg per week!). Bellfield’s Administrator, Gail Stark, detailed the strong use of the building, with 25 regular users providing 45 classes or activities weekly with innumerable one-off community and fundraising events, weddings and parties. Ian Cooke discussed plans for redeveloping Bellfield using a funding strategy of community shares, grants and possible loans. Justin Kenrick then explained that while Bellfield is Action Porty’s major project, we have a wider remit to work with other initiatives and respond to unmet needs. We are pleased to welcome the Community Fridge on board.

Justin Kenrick

NATURE NOTES

IT'S BEGINNING to look like 2023 will be a big year for waxwings. These winter migrants visit our shores every year, but every so often a number of factors – favourable wind conditions, a lack of food in their native Scandinavia and a good berry yield on this side of the North Sea – see an explosion occur.

This is known as an ‘irruption’, with the last truly memorable one probably occurring in the snow of 2010. This year, earlier than usual, flocks of 50 or more of these striking birds have been arriving along the coast.

Waxwings are easy to spot. They flock in a similar way to starlings, perching high in trees, with an almost constant rolling trilling call, then swooping down

to berry-laden bushes to feast. If you see this happening, just take a seat and enjoy the show.

The birds themselves are a mix of the demure and the downright extravagant.

Their softly pink-grey bodies are bookended by a bandit-masked face, topped by a small crest, while the ends of their tails are black, lined with a bright yellow stripe. The ends of their wings give them their name: bright yellow again, with a dot of red whose colour and sheen look like sealing wax for letters.

To see a waxwing is to fall in love with it; and to see a flock doing its thing will brighten your entire day.

Anthony Robson



PHOTO: ANTHONY ROBSON

EDINBURGH DOG AND CAT HOME

THE Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home has launched an urgent Winter Appeal amidst a devastating increase in surrender requests, due to financial difficulties and other personal circumstances. July 2023 saw the highest number of surrender requests on record, a staggering 236 per cent increase from October 2022.

Additionally, EDCH's pet foodbanks support hundreds of animals each week and provide a vital lifeline for pet owners struggling to make ends meet. One foodbank user said: "I've been missing meals myself to make sure my two dogs were being fed. Thanks to the Larder and the Dog and Cat Home, I can eat as well now".

To learn more and to support EDCH's Winter Appeal visit www.edch.org.uk.

RECYCLE YOUR TECH:

Hand in unwanted laptops, phones, tablets, cameras and chargers to Edinburgh Remakery, an award-winning social enterprise. It will refurbish and repair them for resale as well as giving them to people in digital poverty. For details see: www.edinburghremakery.org.uk/donate-items-to-us.

VINTAGE VIBES

is a charity based in Edinburgh that works to tackle isolation and loneliness in the over 60s by pairing volunteers with the 'VIPs' to create genuine, long-lasting friendships. They are looking for volunteers in the Portobello area. If you are interested, find out more at www.vintagevibes.org.uk.

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Volley4Good in action
December 2022



BEACH VOLLEYBALL

VOLLEY4GOOD returns in December after a successful first event last year. The event aims to support local people and communities needing extra help at Christmas time.

Instead of an entry fee, competing teams donate their choice of funds, essential food and household items, or even children's toys and small gifts. With the help of local community groups, charities and schools, donations reach people and families who need them the most. Other local organisations are welcome to get in touch if they are able to help distribute some of the donated items. For more information, including dates, contact edinburghbeachvc@gmail.com.

Lynne Beattie



Ukrainian refugees supported by a club instructor enjoying an introduction to sailing at Portobello Sailing and Kayaking Club

SAILING NEWS

THANKS to a community grant, Portobello Sailing and Kayaking Club was able to offer the opportunity to experience sailing to ten Ukrainian refugees, none of whom had sailed before. The money also helped to provide a translator. Members of the club volunteered for the weekend to work with the group. It

was a great way for them to take part in an activity with local people and a welcome distraction for them at this time. All of the group have gone on to attend weekly club sessions, allowing them to meet new people and appreciate all that both the club and Portobello have to offer.

Andy Johnstone

IN THE SADDLE

IT'S A Portovelo tradition to do longer 'challenge' rides in late summer. This year we did two, both in September. One was a faster 109-mile route south through Innerleithen and almost as far as Hawick, then up to Selkirk and back through Heriot; the second, a fortnight later, was a slower 102-mile loop slightly further west, taking in the Talla reservoir climb and returning through Innerleithen.

Also in September, three club riders (Will Walter, Isaac Hopley and Peter Roscamp) completed the N2 challenge, riding the length of Portugal over five days, while our veteran tandem duo Tim and Carol Jones completed the 1,750 mile Pacific West Coast route in the USA.

Sunday club rides now start at the later time of 9am. Weather permitting, these and our Wednesday social rides, also leaving at 9am, continue throughout the winter months. For details see www.porto-velo.com.

On Friday 8th December, many club members will gather in the Espy for the Christmas night out and awards ceremony, at which the contributions of many to the club's activities will be recognised.

Andrew Mylne

BOWLING



Brunstane Bowling Club's 'Player of the Year' trophy was shared this year by Jessica Young and Jacob Brown. Both represented Edinburgh, winners of the Scottish Under 25 Counties League Cup, defeating Angus in the final at Paisley. The photograph shows the presentation by Presidents Len Morris and Allison Preston. The 2024 season will commence mid April; anyone interested in 'having a go' should contact the club on 0131 657 4417. Juniors (between 8 and 18) should contact Keith on 07748 346186.

RUGBY KEEPS ON GIVING

After a hectic six weeks during the Rugby World Cup, we returned to a normal fixture schedule in the autumn for both adult and kids rugby. There have been some great successes during this period, and seeing some of the new players at all age levels playing hard with smiles on their faces has been rewarding.

November saw us host our annual 'old boys day' that brought a busy sideline full of old faces and a lot of laughs. The club is 100 years old in 2023, and our celebration event is shaping up. We are looking forward to opening the clubhouse for all of the six nation fixture days in the new year.

Darren Crowther (Youth Convenor)

JOPPA TENNIS

THE club's annual dinner was held at the King's Manor Hotel at the end of September. Around 100 adults and children enjoyed a great fun evening with John Frame, legendary Wimbledon and international tennis umpire, delivering a fascinating after-dinner speech with tales of his times working with the greatest tennis players in the world.

Talking of champions, our own Emma Devine and Finn Mclean brought more silverware our way by winning the prestigious 65-year-old Pringle Cup. Fifteen mixed doubles pairings from 13 different clubs, from as far north as Kirkcaldy and from North Berwick in the east, took part in a competitive afternoon of tennis. Musselburgh and Joppa played an exciting final, with Joppa ultimately triumphant.

Winter tennis is weather dependent but as long as there is no snow or ice, the all-weather court surface makes year-round play possible, so see you on the courts soon!

Marjorie Shepherd