

# The Portobello REPORTER

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE	• Portobello Telly	P3
	• Down Memory Lane	P4
	• New Ministers	P6
	• Art Show Success	P7
	• Octopush	P8

**The independent voice of Portobello**

Your Community Newspaper produced by local people.

## COMMUNITY FACES NEW SCHOOLS DILEMMA

THE Council has announced that it proposes building a new Portobello High School and St John's Primary on around one-third of Portobello Golf Course, and developing the present school sites for housing to finance the new buildings. A new and larger golf course would be created on land in the Brunstane area, along with some housing.

Although precise details of the projects have not been established, a Council source has also indicated that they propose developing a possible further third of the park area for housing, leaving one third of the whole site as public open space. They said there is no hope in the foreseeable future of alternative PPP funding by the Scottish Executive, and that all money from the development of all the pieces of land will be used to build the schools and enhance sporting facilities in the area. They also indicated that the majority of local councillors would be against the inclusion of the 5-a-side pitches in the present proposal.

'Conversations', as the Council terms them, are going on, and opinion is divided between those in favour of the proposals, because local children will benefit, and those who are against the loss of open green space in Portobello.

Dr Andrew Fraser, Chair of Portobello High School Board says: "The School needs replacement urgently, so the Board looked all over the



Photo by Peter Ross

catchment area at options for action. We found that, apart from the current site or Portobello Park, there was nowhere else to go. As the Council could not afford to re-build on the current site, there was no plan, so the 'School in the Park' is the option that offers the brighter future for young people in Portobello. The Board realises that the community has to discuss difficult decisions that would result from changing the park, and wishes to highlight the paramount importance of children's interests."

Portobello for New Schools (PFANS) is a group of local residents and parents campaigning for the new schools. They say they are "willing to liaise with the Council and to work with all sections of the community to

ensure a good deal for everyone". Spokesperson, Emma Wood, adds: "The existing schools are unsustainable. We will be demanding that the new schools meet the highest standards and that housing development is minimized. We want to see eco-friendly buildings in a bio-diverse parkland setting and community access to improved recreational facilities".

St John's Primary School were taken by surprise by the proposals and a School Board spokesperson said: "We are looking for more information before making a value judgement on this".

Other people are far from happy, however: Portobello Men's and Ladies' Golf Clubs have formed a sub-committee that includes members of St Philip's Golf Club and Probus,

to organize a campaign against the proposal. The current golf course is five minutes walk from the centre of Portobello, whereas the proposed new site is 45 minutes away and is not reachable by public transport. Fiona McGregor, Portobello Ladies' Captain, says this could affect their membership, as some members walk or take a bus at present.

Local resident Stephen Hawkins says: "There are quite a few bold claims being made, such as a new, first-class golf course and new public parks. The Council has no plans yet on which to consult. We have to wait and see exactly how much land is to be used for housing and the schools, along with where the new golf course and Power League are to go, before being able to decide anything. A couple of things are certain though: if the golf course is built on, there will be a net loss of green space and another accessible Portobello facility will be lost, both of which will be gone forever."

A report on the principle of the proposals will go before the Council on 25th April or 4th May. Community consultation will follow, with meetings and questionnaires.

The Council has produced a list of questions and answers on the proposals, which can be seen at Portobello Library and on the Forum on the [www.porty.org.uk](http://www.porty.org.uk) website.

Brenda Molony

## LOTTERY SUCCESS

THE ornamental Coade Stone Pillars which, until 1989, stood in the garden of Argyle House, Hope Lane, will be erected this year in the new Community Garden on the Promenade, thanks to an award of £49,400 from the Heritage Lottery Fund to Portobello Amenity Society. The Lottery application was supported by Portobello Community Council, other local groups and conservation staff of the City of Edinburgh Council.

The grant will be used to clean and repair the pieces of Coade Stone and construct three decorative pillars. The Council, who own the pillars, have paid for their foundations.

A local potter, funded by the Council, has been working with some High School pupils to make modern Coade for the school yard and the Community Garden. Public talks on Coade Stone and the pillars will take place both during and after their assembly.

Colin McLean, Manager for the Heritage Lottery Fund in Scotland, said, "We're thrilled to be able to help with the restoration of these local landmarks, opening them up for the community. As well as conserving an important heritage asset in Portobello, the project will give the public much wider access to the pillars, both physically and through exhibition, leaflets and young people's activities."

Celia Butterworth

## COMMENDATION FOR WEBSITE

LAST autumn the Community Council again entered Portobello in the Calor Gas Scottish Community of the Year competition, which it won in 1999. Although Portobello didn't win the 2005 title, [www.porty.org.uk](http://www.porty.org.uk) was Highly Commended in the Community Website section (won by Lochwinnoch), and Commended in the Community Life and Older People sections. The overall Scottish Community of the Year was Cornton, Stirling.

The awards were presented at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre in early December and Robert Gatliff, Community Council Chairman said: "The competition must have been strong, but no details of the other submissions were available. What we do know is that no communities from the big cities won any awards, or indeed were nominated, except Portobello!"

## HELEN HOPEKIRK (1856 - 1945) PIANIST, COMPOSER AND TEACHER

HELEN Hopekirk was born in Portobello on 20 May 1856. Her father, Adam Hopekirk, was a Bookseller and Stationer at what is now 148/150 Portobello High Street. The family lived above the shop. In 1868 Adam Hopekirk moved to a larger shop, with a flat above, further east and on the other side of the High Street. This is now 201 Portobello High Street and is occupied by Costcutter. By 1871 Helen had moved to Edinburgh to be closer to her piano tutor George Lichtenstein. She had been a music pupil at Windsor Lodge Academy, and received a very favourable notice in the *Portobello Advertiser* of 31 July 1868 for a public performance at the school's annual examination.

Helen studied for two years at Leipzig Conservatory when she was 18. Her teacher, Theodor Leschetizky described her as "the finest woman musician I have ever known", and after graduation she had successful debuts at the Leipzig Gewandhaus and London's Crystal Palace. She counted luminaries such as Franz Liszt, Anton



Rubenstein, Clara Schumann and Pyotr Tchaikovsky among her mentors and acquaintances. Three acclaimed concert tours of America led to her being invited to teach at the New England Conservatory and she and her husband settled in Boston in 1897. Many of her compositions are based on Scottish/Celtic folk tunes and her collection "70 Scottish Songs" (1905) is still in print. She and her husband became United States citizens in 1918 and she died in 1945.

Portobello Community Council plans to commemorate the 150th anniversary of her birth by erecting a plaque on the outside of one of the premises where she lived with her family and by mounting a recital of Hopekirk works with a reception to honour someone described by musicologists as "something of a second Clara Schumann with a huge career as a touring virtuoso...she was regarded as one of the great concert pianists of her generation."

Dr Gary Steigerwalt and his

wife Dr Dana Muller, who are from New England and acknowledged authorities on Hopekirk's life and work, have assembled a programme of some of her pieces for piano, violin and voice. This will be performed by themselves, Mairi Campbell, violinist, Alison Beck, soprano and a children's choir from St Philip's Church. There will be an illustrated lecture on Helen Hopekirk and her times by the composer and music historian, Dr John Purser, author of *Scotland's Music* before the concert. Dr Purser wrote to us to say, "I am delighted that you are doing something for Hopekirk and will be happy to support any venture. She was an outstanding pianist, a talented composer and is thoroughly deserving of recognition. I intend to include something about her in my new series of *Scotland's Music* on BBC Radio Scotland in 2007."

**The lecture and concert will be in St Marks Church on Friday 19th May. Details will be available nearer the date.**

Archie Foley



## PORTY PROFILE No. 22 JOE MADDEN

Joe Madden was born and raised in a flat at the bottom of Bath Street, overlooking the Prom. He remembers Robertson's the bakers adjacent to his home, with tempting smells of warm bread and freshly baked pies. "It was a great place to grow up, right on the beach and always something going on" he says.

Inspired by his grandfather, who owned a building company, Joe was interested from a young age in starting his own business. In fact, he and a friend wrote and distributed the 'original' *Portobello Reporter*: they put the newspaper together in his bedroom, using carbon paper to make copies, and sold it to family and friends.

This entrepreneurial spirit has remained with Joe, leading him recently to gain a psychology degree and create his own workshops delivering stress management techniques to businesses. The same commitment to helping people deal with the pressures of the workplace also characterises Joe's involvement in community life. For 10 years he has taken a leading role in co-ordinating the local 'Faith and Light Group' that provides social support and activities for people of all ages with special needs.

Also a dedicated and talented musician, Joe is a regular performer in the pubs and bars in Portobello, often entertaining at charity events and taking part in folk sessions. His love of music and performance inspired him to help set up Portobello Open Door, or POD as it is more commonly known, in 2003. His contribution to this local arts and events organisation has been a significant factor in its success over the past three years. POD is now well-known in Portobello and is growing, attracting a diverse membership with an impressive variety of interests, skills and ideas. It is this diversity that Joe values above all else: "I believe that bringing people together to celebrate culture in creative ways helps break down barriers and gives them a sense of pride and belonging", he says.

Joe definitely feels that he belongs to Portobello, describing it as "home sweet home". Despite a number of years in the Navy, travelling the world, he has always been drawn back and still lives here with his partner Diane, who also takes an active role in Portobello life, and enjoys visiting the various members of Joe's family who also still live in the area.

Eilidh Bateman



Photo by Eilidh Bateman

## ON THE BEAT

I HAVE recently had discussions with the Fire Service about inconsiderate parking in some of the narrow streets off Portobello High Street. In response to a recent complaint, they carried out a survey and found the streets behind the Police Station, Beach Lane, Mentone Avenue and Bath Street particularly bad. Clearly they need unrestricted access should their services be required in the area. The Cleansing Department also often have difficulty accessing the communal bins due to vehicles parked next to them. I would appeal to all who park in this area to be considerate, and warn those who cause an obstruction that their vehicle will be removed at considerable cost to themselves.

Now that the days are lengthening we look forward to the year ahead, but another word of caution about criminal activities at this time of the year: statistically it is shown that the months of January and February are favoured by the housebreaker. Whether it is that kids are back to school, folks are back at work, and the latest games consoles and lap tops may be scattered about the home, the fact that it still gets dark in the afternoon may have something to do with it. Ensure that your home's security is up to scratch, keep using a timer to switch lights on in the afternoon and, those who are at home, be alert to strangers in the street and do not hesitate to give us a call.

On a positive note, however, I can say that during December and January, housebreakings in the Portobello area have been relatively low, but do not be complacent at any time of the year - keep your property safe.

Insp. Norman Ward

## JOIN YOUR COMMUNITY COUNCIL

**PORTOBELLO** Community Council is one of the most effective in the city. It consists of elected members and nominated representatives of local groups, who meet once a month to address local issues, often with a guest speaker. A term of office is three years, and elections

are due in April this year. A Notice will appear in the press and on posters on 11th April and nomination forms will be available at the Library. For more information see the City Council website [www.edinburgh.gov.uk](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk) nearer the time.

## PLANS FOR WEST END OF PORTOBELLO

IN December PCAP it was learnt that the Scottish Power site had been sold by Duddingston House Properties to BL Developments, who specialise in housing. According to David McDonald, director of the Cockburn Association, who came across BL when they took over the site at Shrub Place, BL Developments seems to like consulting local communities. He set up a meeting between BL's Managing Director and Portobello Campaign Against The Superstore (PCATS), to discuss how consultations should be carried out. Further meetings are to be arranged with local residents, the Community Council and other groups.

A new local group - Portobello Energy Descent and Land Reform (PEDAL), has produced an alternative plan for the Scottish Power site: their Energy Decent Plan includes affordable eco-friendly housing, arts and exhibition space, a Centre for Alternative Futures, and an eco-hotel and conference centre.

Based on this, PEDAL sent an application to the Big Lottery's Living Landmarks Fund for £45 million, titled 'Eco-Bello: Working to make Portobello Britain's first Eco-Town'. They now need help from the whole community to draw up detailed plans and are holding a 'Post-it Ceilidh' in the Town Hall on 11th March. Their ideas will be displayed, with a map of Portobello and the site, to which other suggestions can be added on 'Post-its'. Tickets from Portobello Stationers. For more info, visit [www.pedal-porty.org.uk](http://www.pedal-porty.org.uk)

The Council planning department is to undertake a full master-plan for the development of the west end of Portobello, including the Standard Life, Scottish Power and Power League sites. This will, presumably, now have to take account of the aims of BL and PEDAL as well as the wider community. An independent consultant will be appointed to take this forward and Cllr Maureen Child has promised that the starting point will be the participation of people in the community. There will be a series of public meetings at which everyone will have a chance to influence how this area develops. Look out for when they are to take place.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

**NIGHT TIME ANTI-SOCIAL NOISE:** The Council has the powers to combat antisocial noise, which interferes with reasonable use of your property or prevents rest and sleep. They can issue warnings about noise, such as loud music, and issue a fixed penalty notice of £100. If it continues, the noise-making equipment can be removed. Teams are on duty from 8am to 4am on weekdays, and from 6am at weekends: call 311 3131. They have dealt with nearly 2000 calls in the city in the first three months, including about 30 in Portobello and Milton.

**SMALL BUSINESS, BIG SUCCESS:** The Ardgarth Guest House in St. Mary's Place, was Overall Winner of the 2005 Leonard Cheshire Scotland Business Award. The prize is in recognition of businesses in Scotland which promote inclusion and equality for disabled employees and customers. Ardgarth are the smallest business ever given the award and they got it because of their 'can do' attitude. Well done to Ursula and Richard Wright!

**FUNDING FOR PUBLIC ART:** One of the most interesting aspects of Big Things on the Beach's commissioning of public art has been the debate about the art works themselves. Some people loved them; others loathed them. If you think you could do better, now is your chance because BTOB has secured £48,000 of Scottish Arts Council and Lottery funding to develop the skills of local people to commission and manage public art projects for Portobello. A part-time development worker will be appointed to organise a training course and manage two (or more) projects. The course will run over the next two years and will be open to up to 40 local people. Look out for regular updates as the project progresses.

**DONATIONS FOR DOG AND CAT HOME:** Over the Christmas period ASDA customers raised £7000 in cash, and £500 in food for the 'Christmas Dinner Appeal', which was collected in a shopping trolley at the services desk. The cash will go towards a refurbishment project at the Home.

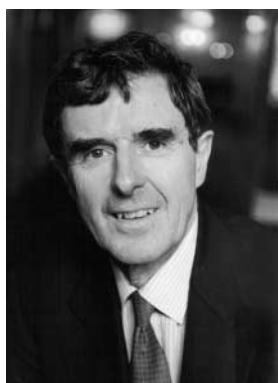
**STUDIO ART SCHOOL:** Local resident Fiona Crosbie is a founder member of an innovative, award-winning online art school that won the award for best start-up business from Midlothian Chamber of Commerce and Enterprise in July 2005. For more information and details of courses visit [www.studioartschool.co.uk](http://www.studioartschool.co.uk)

**KILNS UPDATE:** An estimate for £35,000 for repairs to the kilns is to be put forward for inclusion in the council's maintenance budget for 2006-07, to cover only cutting back vegetation, scaffolding and re-pointing. There is no guarantee that this bid will be successful. Maintenance of the iron belts is not included and quotations have not yet been sought. The council are responsible for the stewardship of these unique buildings, monuments of the pottery industry not only of Portobello, but also of the east coast of Scotland. Margaret Munro of Portobello History Society says, "A regular maintenance programme, rather than minimal, necessary repairs would have been more beneficial and cost effective."

**CHILDREN'S COMPETITION:** To celebrate the restoration of the Coade Stone pillars, Portobello children's groups are invited to take part in a competition to make totem pillars for display at the POD summer event on the Prom. Information sheets are available at the Library.

To contact *The Portobello Reporter* you can telephone 0131 669 3466 or email [portyreporter@btinternet.com](mailto:portyreporter@btinternet.com)

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## A NEW HOGMANAY TRADITION?

FOR the first time in living memory, the Portobello Police Station clock rang in the New Year. A large and happy crowd assembled to celebrate the occasion with a rousing chorus of 'Auld Lang Syne' and much popping of corks. When the bell was re-instated last year, a switch was installed that would override the normal shut-off time of 10pm for this one night of the year. So, on New Year's Eve, and before he'd had a drink, Bob Jefferson climbed up into the clock tower to make the necessary adjustment, and then had to remember to change it back the next day! The mechanism then went haywire (not his fault!) and anyone who thought they heard it chime 13 was not hallucinating! It was soon fixed, however, and should behave itself next time.

It has now been suggested that this kind of informal event might become a focal point for Hogmanay celebrations in Portobello.

B.M

## ADOBE GIFT TO THE REPORTER

SOFTWARE giant Adobe Systems have donated software to the *Portobello Reporter* to help with the layout and design of the paper. Local man and Adobe employee, Christophe Jossic, contacted the *Reporter* and offered Adobe's support. The *Portobello Reporter* is grateful to Adobe for their generosity.



## 'PORTOBELLY TELLY'

THE latest exciting development from our community website 'Portobello Online' is 'Portobelly Telly'.

Broadband technology means that we can now add video content to the site, and we believe that community internet TV, still in its infancy, is set to become an important interactive medium.

We are fortunate to have the services of Christeen Winford and David Halliday, professional film directors and producers living in Portobello, and local film maker Graham Kitchener, whose short film 'Bingo' enjoyed its world premiere on 'Portobelly Telly'.

Content varies, from film of a street party in Lee Crescent in 1981 to celebrate the Royal Wedding, to coverage of a recent poetry reading in the Dalriada. We even have our own TV Chef spot where we come to your house and film you cooking your favourite dish!

We are keen to hear from anyone who would like to get involved. If you own a video camera (or even a digital camera or mobile phone with video mode) then you have all it takes to create your own material for 'Portobelly Telly'. Anything and everything considered. For more info go to [www.porty.org.uk/tv](http://www.porty.org.uk/tv)

(Free broadband internet access is available at Portobello Library and the Community Centre).

Bob Jefferson

## HIGH STREET IMPROVEMENTS

IMPROVEMENT works are starting in Portobello High Street in early March and should be completed by the beginning of July. Details are displayed in the notice board outside the Town Hall and the Council thanks all those who took part in the public consultations to help develop these and associated projects in the area.

These improvements to pedestrian and vehicular safety include: renewing footpath and bus stop lay-by surfaces; re-arranging bus stop and loading bays; realignment and installation of new kerbing and drainage; upgrading of existing pelican crossing and traffic

signals at crossroads; and rationalisation of street furniture and tree planting to improve pedestrian movement and accessibility to shops.

Every effort will be made to minimize inconvenience to residents, customers, shopkeepers and businesses. In the meantime, may I encourage everyone to maintain their use and support of local shops and businesses during this period. Shops will remain open at their normal times.

If you wish to comment on any aspect of this project, please contact the Council's Project Manager, Stuart Smith on 529 3423.

Cllr Lawrence Marshall

EDINBURGH City Libraries and Information Service is holding a Festival of Scottish Writing between 13-28th May, with lots of author events planned.

Portobello Library will have a talk by local crime writer Allan Guthrie (highly rated by Ian Rankin) and his fellow author friend Ray Banks on Saturday 20th May from 2-3.30pm. Allan has written *Two-way Split* and *Kiss her Goodbye*.

Adults' Book Group: This friendly group meet on the first Tuesday of the month from 6.30-8pm for informal discussion, with a wide range of opinion, of a variety of literature. The book for March is *Close Range* by Annie Proulx; April - *Spring Flowers* by Ismail Kadare; May - *Saving Fish from Drowning* by Amy Tan; June - *Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver.

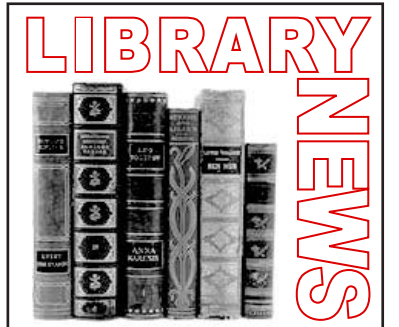


Photo by Brenda Molony

'Rhymetime': Ever since Christmas, Library officer Heather Morrison has been leading weekly sessions of stories and rhymes for babies and parents, with around 52 people now enjoying them regularly. Team leader Joyce Campbell says: "Using books and words with very young babies helps their concentration and that is vital for later life. They are the next generation of readers and this is a lovely way to start them off".

'Chatterbooks': This is an Orange Prize for Fiction initiative to create reading groups for children in libraries and the Portobello group is for 8-10 year-olds. It meets on the last Saturday of the month from 2-3pm in the Community Room. Each month has a theme, and although the children read different books, all are related. After discussing the books and writing a short review, there is a break for juice and biscuits, followed by an activity relating to the theme, such as drawing, clay modelling or writing poems.

For more information on all library activities, call 529 5558 or e-mail [portobello.library@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:portobello.library@edinburgh.gov.uk)

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# ANDRE LETTA, PORTOBELLO'S COURT MAGICIAN

IN the 1950s, when I was little, my Auntie Mag used to tell me stories about a wonderful magician called Andre Letta. So, when Bob Jefferson suggested using the Scotsman archives for the Porty On-line Local History Project, I thought that here was my opportunity to track him down.

Andre Letta was born in the 1870s, under the more prosaic name of Robert Horne Stewart, and trained as a stage magician. On 30 July 1904, he performed at Balmoral in front of King Edward and Queen Alexandra and thereafter began to describe himself as Scotland's Court Magician.

During the summer months he would go off round the towns and villages of Scotland in a horse drawn caravan, performing feats of magic in village halls and pubs. The 1919 Caravan Tour consisted of Letta, with his conjuring tricks, Jeanette Bentley, a soprano, James Hart, a fiddler, and Nora Milne, pianist. Normally at each stop the two women slept in digs while the men used the caravan, but it appears that at various places on the 1919 concert tour, the ladies of the party were unable to get lodgings and they had been compelled to sleep in the caravan. Inevitably, allegations were made, and Jeanette Bentley's husband accused her of adultery with Andre Letta. This prompted Letta's wife to sue him for divorce. He in turn countersued, accusing her of adultery with a soldier called Tommy Nelson. Jeanette Bentley also countersued, accusing her husband of impropriety with a barmaid called Sadie Montague from York Place. The case lasted for months.

By February 1924 Letta had moved his productions from the Promenade having bought number 14 Bath Street, one of the larger Georgian villas with a substantial garden. Here every year his company put on 'Pierrot' shows in what he termed The Portobello Pavilion. The productions staged at the Pavilion were often lavish affairs and drew large audiences. Letta gave opportunities to many performers who later went on to become stars and comedian Dave Willis and singer Donald Peers are probably the best known examples.

In September of 1933 fire broke out at the Pavilion Theatre. Part of the roof was destroyed and several rooms were damaged by water and smoke. The catastrophe seems to have galvanized Andre Letta into action. The theatre was repaired and he negotiated a contract with the BBC. From June 1934, the shows from the Pavilion Theatre, Portobello were broadcast on the Scottish Regional Programme. Over 2,000 people a week were coming through the doors. Unfortunately, he was greedy and made regular trips to the courts for violation of the regulations governing Entertainment Duty. The government tax was sixpence. Letta was charging people ninepence, issuing them, with threepenny tickets and pocketing the sixpence tax. He was lucky to avoid imprisonment.

In the summer of 1938, Andre Letta decided to give up his theatres, disband his Pierrot troupe and return to conjuring in variety shows in the Edinburgh theatres.

The Pavilion was bought by Harry Paulo and the Codona brothers and they announced in September that they were going to spend £20,000 on a grand cinema, to be known as the County.

During the Second World War Andre Letta appeared regularly in concerts to entertain the troops. From the end of the war he disappeared from the pages of the Scotsman but did appear regularly in an Edinburgh department store as Santa Claus at Christmas. He died sometime in the late 1950s.



David Irving

# DOWN MEMORY LANE

MY memories of Porty date to the 1970s when the open air pool was our favourite place during the summer. A photo on the front page of the Evening News, showed me leaping from the diving board into the icy cold water, having queued all night to be the first girl in. Come rain or shine we would swim out to the 'raft' in the middle of the deep end and stay on it so long that it took great courage to plunge back in and swim to the side and make for the showers. There we would attach our key wristband to keep the hot water flowing, to get warm enough to change. The lifeguards were a great crowd and I remember one called Roman.

We were typical teenagers, and going to Porty High via Fishwives Causeway and Baileyfield Road was a lengthy daily walk that we hardly noticed. The school was ruled by a rod of iron, with Mr Bagley as Head Master and Miss Wishart to keep the girls in check. I will be forever grateful to my German teacher, Miss Crawford, for giving me a sound introduction to a language that I later used when I lived abroad for a couple of years, and Mr Robertson, my Latin teacher, for ensuring I understood a language which I now regularly need to refer to in my work.

Living in the Borders, I still love to travel home from Edinburgh via 'Porty', especially in the summer. The St Andrews Grill used to serve the best hamburger supper in the land. I wonder if it still does.

Sheila Richardson (formerly Sinclair)

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# POSTCARD POSER



**THIS** 1900s picture postcard showing the High Street east from Alexander Brand's baker shop at the top of Regent Street is fairly common and one that many collectors will have in their collection. What makes this example unusual are the details on the reverse.

To begin with, the card was not used until about 50 years after publication. It has two Elizabeth II fourpenny stamps and is postmarked Fulham, SW 6 on 4th July 1966. The addressee is Peter Bull, Esq and the card was redirected from an address in Greece to Kings Road, London. The message – slightly shortened – reads: "Since we last [met] I have been to Peru, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Jamaica and Norwich. The sun is belting down Peter and Anne has gone quite dark again. Would you support John Gregson in the new B Levy play trying out at Malvern for £65 if and when it comes up West? We're all very well and merry. M Gough"

Peter Bull had a long, successful career on stage and in films playing supporting roles, often with big name

stars, such as Peter Sellers in *Dr Strangelove* and Humphrey Bogart in *The African Queen*. His other claim to fame was that he was a noted collector of Teddy Bears. He founded the Teddy Bear society and wrote an acclaimed history of the popular toy. John Gregson, of course, was a very popular leading man and made his name in a number of war films like *The Battle of the River Plate*. He was also seen in comedy roles and scored his biggest success in the ever popular film *Genevieve*.

The person whose play is the subject of the message was probably the playwright, director and Labour MP, Benn Levy but identification of the sender is more problematic. One suggestion is Michael Gough, the tall actor who was in Hammer horror films in the fifties and sixties and more recently played Alfred the butler in four Batman films.

The mystery of how this card, which was bought at auction in 2005, came to be used and spotted in London SW6 so long after it was issued will probably never be solved.

Archie Foley

# JOHN BAILLIE, FAMILY BAKER



**JOHN** Baillie probably began his bakery business in Portobello in the 1850s. This photograph was taken between 1877 and 1881, because that was when the photographer, George McKenzie, had his studio in Willowbrae House. Its publication on *The History of Photography in Edinburgh* by Peter Stubbs ([www.edinphoto.org.uk](http://www.edinphoto.org.uk)) brought us more information about the Baillie family and its long association with Portobello. Mrs Elizabeth Baillie of Grimsby, whose husband is a great-grandson of John Baillie, sent us the following details:

"John Philips Baillie was born in Dundee in 1839 and by the time he married Mary Laing Ovens in 1862 he was already a Master Baker with an address of 34 Portobello High Street. In the 1891 Census the family home was at 21 Tower Street and a family of three sons, one having died in childhood, and six daughters had been born.

John Philips Baillie died in 1892 but his widow and sons George and John continued the business. In an advertisement in the *Portobello Directory* of 1895-1896, the business is well established with two premises, one at '51 High Street (opposite Tower Street)' and another at '86 High Street (Adjoining National Bank)'. In a similarly worded advertisement in the *Portobello Directory* of 1900-1901 the premises are listed as '95 High Street (opposite Tower Street)', '160 High Street (Adjoining National Bank)', and 'Morton Street, Joppa'. It would seem that a re-numbering of the High Street had taken place and an additional shop acquired.

George Baillie, having married Emma Eva Rutherford Thomson, a Teacher of Singing, is shown with his young family at 54 Regent Street, in 1901. He continued the business until his death in 1934 but, as both his sons were in the Merchant Navy, the business was closed and became the Melrose Dairy. My husband remembers that Mrs Melrose delivered milk from a chum on a pony and cart and he was given a ride on the cart down into Portobello from his home in Wakefield Avenue."

A F

## PORTOBELLO HISTORY SOCIETY NEWS

**THERE** was a very large audience for the first meeting of 2006 on 1st February to hear Professor Harry Dickinson's lecture on *The Porteous Riot in Edinburgh, 1736 to 1737*. Professor Dickinson's easy, informal presentation enabled him to explain the causes, happenings and consequences of this celebrated, not to say notorious, event in the history of Edinburgh so effectively that there was scarcely any need for questions at the end.

The meeting on 1st March took an unusual form. Phyllis Davison was brought up in Edinburgh and went to Dundee University before emigrating to Canada. Every year she returns for a few months to Edinburgh where she is active in the storytelling community at Netherbow. Using the theme "That ship is waiting for me" she gave a presentation of stories, songs and poems telling of Scottish migration to Canada. Settlers, railroad men, rebels and politicians all appeared in her narrative.

The topics of climate change and global warming are seldom out of the news these days so it is fitting that the history society should afford the opportunity for people to look at the evidence and take the long view. So local expert, Robert Gatliff of the British Geological Survey will present *Climate Change in Portobello: A geological perspective over the last 400 million years... and the next few hundred!* on Wednesday 5th April.

The last speaker of this session will be one of our members; Colin Warwick recently retired after many years working at the Dick Vet and his talk is titled *The History of Veterinary Colleges in Edinburgh*. This will be on Wednesday 3rd May.

Meetings are held in St John's Church Hall Brighton Place at 7pm. They are open to the public but a donation to society funds from non-members is appreciated. Everyone is asked to arrive in good time to ensure getting a seat and as a courtesy to our guest speakers.

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## PORTOBELLO AMNESTY

THE Group were saddened by the death last September of founder-member Lily Grubb who, although she had moved and was in ill-health, maintained an interest in Group activities. A collection was taken at Lily's funeral from which the Group received £360 towards Amnesty's work.

Last November Rosemary Burnett, Campaigns Director in Scotland, gave an illustrated talk in the Evergreen shop, on her year in Guatemala in 2004, where possibly 80,000 Mayan people had been massacred in their villages by armed groups, alleged to have government approval. Survivors are seeking justice in the courts, and visitors like Rosemary help to give them the confidence to brave reprisals and act as witnesses.

Our stall on the High Street in December resulted in 48 greeting cards being sent by the public to prisoners of conscience and human rights defenders in four countries; Holy Rood pupils sent a further 20. The Group continues to campaign against human rights violations.

Plans for 2006 include a Coffee Morning and Book Sale at the URC Hall, Marlborough Street on 18th March, and a street collection on 20th May.  
David Turner

## WHAT'S ON

**POD VINTAGE FILM NIGHT:** 'Grease' – the classic John Travolta and Olivia Newton John musical will be shown in the Community Centre on the 18th of March at 7pm. Hotdogs and popcorn will be on sale as well as an authentic fifties disco and party after the movie. Tickets cost £6 full price and £4 concession and are available from Kitcheners Deli. 'Grease' style fancy dress is encouraged – Not to be missed.

## FROM TAIWAN TO PORTOBELLO

THE Rev. Ralph Dunn became Minister of Wilson Memorial United Free Church in November 2005. He and his wife Anne say: "We are delighted with this appointment and look forward to getting to know the local community". Ralph is a Dalkeith man, although born in South Wales, and Anne is from Easthouses; they have four grown-up children and five grandchildren.

After a spell in the Civil Service in London, Ralph served as a Police Constable in Musselburgh and Gorebridge from 1964-68. He and Anne and daughter Lorraine then moved to Glasgow, where two years at the Bible Training Institute led to work in Taiwan from 1971-77, with Overseas Missionary Fellowship.

On returning to Scotland, Ralph gained a BA in Chinese History & Biblical Studies at Edinburgh University in 1979. He then qualified in RE at Moray House and held several teaching posts, the last as Head of RE at Stewart's-Melville College.

Ralph served Edinburgh West United Free Congregation as a Lay Pastor for six years. This led to further studies of Theology with Oxford University and his ordination as Minister of Millerston Church, Glasgow in December 1999.

Ralph is a keen cyclist and has taken part in two marathon fundraisers: from Nazareth to Bethlehem in 1993, and from the Great Wall of China to Beijing in June 2005. "A leisurely pedal around Portobello suits me well enough now", he says.



Photo by Brenda Molony

## MAGGIE'S MONSTER BIKE & HIKE

EVER made a New Year resolution to 'get fit'? Well local cyclist Trevor MacDonald has found a way of keeping to it and raising money for Maggie's Cancer Care. Maggie's Monster Bike and Hike involves traversing the Great Glen Way from Fort William to Inverness in a 30 mile cycle followed by an 8, 22 or 40 mile hike.

"The event combines two enjoyable forms of exercise with fantastic scenery, great camaraderie and the opportunity to raise money for a good cause" says Trevor.

A team of six from the council's Private Housing Services have begun training and a few aches and pains are already being felt.

"We've all been touched by cancer either personally, within our families, or within our circle of friends and anything that can ease the strain can only be a good thing. We need to raise £500 each in sponsorship. Just pay a wee visit to our web site [www.justgiving.com/housinghuffers](http://www.justgiving.com/housinghuffers), make a contribution, and you'll get a big 'thank you' from the team".

## BRODIE! – THE MUSICAL

THE Brunstane North Drama Group at St Philip's Church are busy rehearsing *BRODIE! – The Musical*, based on the colourful life of Deacon William Brodie. Brodie's dual personality, thought to be the inspiration for Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, is an important part of the story, and the musical explores the two sides to all our personalities.

The show premiered at St Philip's 10 years ago, and in the Fringe Festival the following year it received rave reviews with sell-out performances, and was a 'Pick of the Day' in *The Scotsman*. So due to popular demand by cast and audiences alike, the group decided the time was right for a revival. Author Gavin Booth, an elder at St Philip's for many years, and composer Nancy Kent, who lives locally, say they are "thrilled and delighted" that people remember their show with such affection.

To enable this fun-packed family show to be seen by a wider audience, the group are staging it at George Square Theatre, where they hope the loyal folk of Portobello will continue to support them.

Show times: Thursday 30th March - Saturday 1st April, 7.30pm; Saturday Matinee, 2.30pm.

Tickets are available on 0131 669 2322/ 4337 or via the website [www.brodie-themusical.info](http://www.brodie-themusical.info)  
Prices: Child/OAP £8, Adult £10. Matinee: Child £5, Adult £7.

Debbie Halley

## QUAKER MEETINGS

MEETINGS of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) have been held in various places in Portobello for about eight years. Quakers have no prepared service in their meetings for worship: they wait together in silence on the leadings of God, whether thought of as the Light, the Divine, Love, Truth and out of this silence someone may occasionally speak briefly, pray, read from the Bible or other religious writings.

All are welcome and Friends are delighted when people come to share with them in worship. At present meetings are held in Portobello Old Parish Church (Café area) on the first Sunday of the month at 7.30pm. Enquiries to Alastair Cameron (669 5129) or David Turner (669 1308).

## A NEW PRIEST FOR ST MARK'S



ST MARK'S Scottish Episcopal Church in Portobello held the collation service of our new Priest in Charge, the Revd. Ruth Innes on February 28th 2006.

Born and brought up in Edinburgh she attended James Gillespie's School. After working in the Royal Bank, Ruth had several jobs before setting up her own design business. As she became more involved in the Church she gave up her business to work for The Rock Trust, supporting young homeless people. Ruth has spoken out about homelessness and is committed to raising awareness of the issue.

Ruth trained for the priesthood at New College, Edinburgh and was ordained deacon in 2000 and into the priesthood a year later. In 2002 she was appointed Priest in Charge of St Peter's Linlithgow and St Columba's Bathgate, where she enjoyed her community work and continued to serve on the committee of a young peoples' project.

Ruth is a lone parent of two grown up boys, and is easily recognised because of her love of all things purple!

Ruth says "I am looking forward to getting to know the community especially at such an exciting time. Portobello looks like becoming a more vibrant and desirable part of our city and I have fond memories of spending all my summer holidays at the Open Air Pool. I see a lot of changes now but hope that St Mark's can continue to be welcoming and inclusive for all."

Pat Cant

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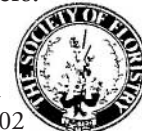
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# ART SHOW SUCCESS FOR 'THE BASE'



**PORTOBELLO** High School pupils, working with Nick Guise in the Alternative Education Support Base, held their third annual Art Exhibition and Sale in December. They produced stained glass work, jewellery and ornaments and organised a formal exhibition, with a private viewing with invited guests. The exhibition ran for four days and was well supported by pupils, parents, staff and other visitors.

These exhibitions have raised over £2150 and the Alternative Education Department was one of the three finalists in the 'Schools for All' category at the Scottish Education Awards, held at the Glasgow Science Centre last year.

The Department is keen to support local charities and organisations and has made donations from the proceeds of the sales to 'WomanZone'; Magdalene, Northfield and Portobello Community Centres; and Portobello High School Playground Improvement Initiative. In January £150 was donated to the Edinburgh Dog and Cat Home: pictured are, from left, Nick Guise, Chris Marshall (S4) and Stacey McCart (S4) presenting the cheque to Wendy Mullen and her dog Amy, at the Home.

# ECO-FRIENDLY HOLY ROOD



**THE** school is currently involved in the Eco-Schools initiative which is raising awareness of environmental issues such as energy, nature conservation and re-cycling. The Eco Club are seen here with Mr Stanley in Craft and Design building bird boxes for the school campus. Other planned projects include paper re-cycling and energy conservation. The group, led by Mr Harris, is growing in popularity and attracting pupils across year groups who hope to tackle many issues in the year ahead.

# NEWS FROM TOWERBANK

**LAST** November pupils in P7 at Towerbank Primary school were given the opportunity to enter a competition for the French Institute. It was called 'Lire en Fete' and involved writing and illustrating a book. The book had to be six to 12 pages long and have at least one sentence on each page written completely in French. It could be done in groups of no more than six or individually, and many pupils took this opportunity. There were three categories, P1-3, P4-7 and S1-S2, with gold, silver or bronze prizes. In our category there were about 500 entries. All of the books were great, but Lotti Lancaster, P7B, came out with an outstanding silver award! We would like to say a big "well done" to all the competitors and a huge "thank you" to our French teachers, Madame McPhail and Mr Rausch who made it possible!

Mercy Eden and Lotti Lancaster, P7

**ALSO** in November, P4A at Towerbank Primary entered an eco photographic competition advertised in a national Families magazine. They had to take photos of something in their local environment that they would like to get rid of and something they wanted to be kept. The pupils chose lots of different areas in Portobello and around the school and produced some fabulous photographs. In February, two large parcels arrived at Towerbank, containing a book about the environment for each of two pupils who were runners up: Mohasin Ahmed aged 8, for his photograph of the pottery kilns that he wanted to be kept, and Thomas McCathie-Arthur, 9, who photographed a wheelie bin in Figgate Burn that he would like to see removed. The whole school are very proud of their achievements.

Mrs H Brown, Class Teacher

## BACK DOWN TO EARTH FOR STAR PUPIL

**HANNAH** McDiarmid, local high school student has returned from a trip to NASA.

Last year Hannah won a place on the Scottish schools' trip and spent seven days in January exploring the famous space station in Houston, Texas.

Twenty-six pupils from across the country spent the week meeting NASA personnel and their families, including the astronauts, and taking part in team challenges. "We had to work together to build model rockets and make presentations - it was great fun", she says.

Hannah was inspired by her experience and not only has she made 25 new friends but she now sees a future career in space science as a real option.

## SILENT AUCTION TO RAISE FUNDS FOR AFRICA TRIP

**IN** February of 2007, two sixth year pupils from Portobello High School will be travelling to Kenya for four months, working as volunteers on conservation and community projects.

Hazel MacDonald and Louise McGeary need to raise almost £4,000 each, in order to make this happen.

On 24th March they are having a Silent Auction in St James Parish Church Halls, and ask if anyone has any unwanted new items which they would be willing to donate towards their project. Alternatively, go along on the night at 7.30pm and bid for a bargain! To contact Hazel, please phone 669 7222



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**www.warchildmusic.com**  
War Child is a charity working in The Congo, Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the former Yugoslavia, where its work began in the 1990s. Its download site includes hits from major artists, up-and-coming acts and independent music. Profits go to support the charity's work with children in war-torn countries - Lots of information given.

**www.liet.nl**  
This is the official website of a unique European minority language song contest. Hosted in Sweden this year, 'Liet Lavlut' is now in its fourth year and calls upon singers, bands and songwriters to come forward with entries for the competition before the 17th of April. Attracting a great deal of international media attention, this is a great opportunity for any aspiring Scots or Gaelic language musicians out there.

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## COMMUNITY CENTRE NEWS

**WORK** will start shortly to redevelop the entrance at Portobello Community Centre to provide a new reception and office area, freeing up the current office space and enabling more activities to take place. Then, it will be on with raising £2 million to rebuild on this site. Anyone interested in organising/running fundraising events would be welcomed onto the management committee. It's your community centre at the heart of your community - Come along and see what is happening here, or what you would like to see happening, visit our website [www.portobello.cc](http://www.portobello.cc), tel: 669 8275, e-mail [enquiries@portobello.cc](mailto:enquiries@portobello.cc)

**The Thursday Gentle Exercise** class with Bev has a few spaces - All ages and abilities welcomed for this fun class at 10am.

**Yoga for Women** with free crèche is still on Fridays from 10-11am and still only £3 - Women of all ages are welcome. Baby Massage follows from 11.15-12.15 for babies of two months and over.

**Karate Kids** are on Wednesdays from 5.30-6.30 and Saturday mornings from 10am. Call 657 1125/657 2085 for more information. For the complete Centre programme see the website, or call in for a paper copy.

## 2006 SPRING AQUATHON

**THIS** year's well-established age-group aquathon event will start at 9am on Sunday 2nd April. Participants will have to swim 750 meters in Portobello Baths followed by a 5 kilometer run on Portobello Promenade. The Spring Aquathon is very popular with both athletes and spectators and is always well attended.

Registration will be at 8am in the baths. For more information about the event see [www.edinburghracingcoop.co.uk](http://www.edinburghracingcoop.co.uk) or call 657 4716.

**AT** this busy, rewarding time I make a list of jobs split into dry/outside or wet/inside to make the most of available opportunities. If the weather is really bad you can get a good start by planting seeds a few weeks ahead on a windowsill or in the greenhouse; leave extra space in the containers for hardening off. Ensure that trays and pots have been washed (I use a mild solution of environmentally friendly washing up liquid) and that seeds are in date/temperature order.



with Susan Burns

Make one trip to your local garden supplier to buy peat-free seed compost to warm up in the greenhouse before using - you wouldn't like to be popped straight into a cold bath and seeds like a warmer start too; I also keep a watering can full in the greenhouse so that it's not too cold for tender seedlings. Buy Epsom salts in case of yellowing between veins of tomatoes, due to magnesium deficiency, and apply if necessary at 25gm/sqm or as a foliar spray of 210gm/10Ltr water; and grit or sharp sand for drainage to add to your own compost for potting on. No further trips are needed and the extra time can be used to walk around and enjoy the garden. When the weather improves you can keep up with weeding, then mulch with the contents of your compost heap as you empty it - that's two jobs done in one.

Keep worm-bin compost for top-dressing greedy plants - I use it for my grapes, fig and apricot. Thinking ahead, set up a comfrey or nettle bin. Not so much worm-bin juice comes off during the winter, but I occasionally check so that the worms don't get too wet, and use any juice to give potted plants a first boost, then after a few weeks your new comfrey juice can be used.

I use my home-made compost to grow different types of tomatoes in old fish boxes. I defy anyone who has grown their own not to really enjoy the taste - We even had some last year that tasted of strawberries. Try a few varieties to see which you like.

If you're new to pruning roses, pop into the library and check how to do it, or if you have a gardening guru, ask them to show you. Although new research has shown that you can just cut them back with abandon, I am old-fashioned and do it the way my Mum showed me. Cut back buddleia, but not the one with orange globes, as this flowers on last year's wood. If in doubt, cut back anything after flowering, and that includes rampant clematis - If you do make a mistake, unless you cut right to the ground, you'll only miss flowers for a year. I only cut off old hydrangea heads once the new foliage is well out with the little florets showing, to avoid frost damage.

Apples and pears can also be pruned before buds burst into flower. If you've noticed white fluffy stuff (woolly aphid) on your apple trees, an old toothbrush and soapy water will wash off most, and do the same for grape vines, poking into crevices in the bark where pests hide. Hang bird feeders in trees and they'll eat the aphids for you too.

## AND ...ACTION!

**AFTER** running 'the deli' in Portobello High Street for 15 years, Graham Kitchener is moving on, to pursue new horizons in the film industry. "The time has come to take the gamble and go for it", he says. "Life's too short to look back in 20 years and wonder if I could have made it in a creative industry that I'm very passionate about".

This year sees several deadlines for projects: a second draft of a feature film script to be submitted to Paramount Pictures, another feature script to be set in Scotland; a film to edit of the visit to Edinburgh by the Dalai Lama; and a new documentary for next year on the relief of poverty in Africa. On top of that Graham is off in September to the prestigious film school in Rockport, Maine to hone his director's skills.

Graham's last day at the deli will be on Saturday 1st April, and he would be only too pleased to see anyone who can manage to get along. "I owe a lot to my customers and my staff, especially Fiona, over the last 15 years", he says, "and I will miss you all. But it will be business as usual at the deli under its new owners".

## OCTOPUSH MAKES A SPLASH

**OCTOPUSH**, or underwater hockey, came to Portobello in December when the Swim Centre hosted the 2005 Ladies Home International Championships. The highlight of the tournament was Scotland Elite v England Elite, which England won 2-0.

Competitors in this unusual sport battle it out on the bottom of the pool wearing a mask, snorkel and flippers. Scuba tanks are not used. Short bats are used to pass the puck, aiming for the specially made goals on the bottom of the pool. Teams of 10 players are allowed, with six competing at any one time, with substitutions made at any time during the match.

Portobello pool is ideal for this, as it has a moveable bottom that provides a 'level playing field', and spectators in the gallery have a clear view of the action.

Libby Dale, Scotland Elite captain, is keen to bring the sport to Portobello. The Edinburgh club has been playing at Dalry pool for 14 years and anyone interested can go along on Friday evenings, or contact Libby on 669 2609. For further information on underwater hockey visit [www.gbuwh.co.uk](http://www.gbuwh.co.uk)

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