

The Portobello REPORTER

The independent voice of Portobello

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Your Community Newspaper produced by local people.

COMMUNITIES TO GAIN CONTROL OF SERVICES

RECENT Scottish legislation requires councils to establish Local Community Planning Partnerships, which are intended to give communities greater control of many council services in their areas. They will become effective from May 2007, after the local council elections.

In Edinburgh, this will be put into effect in 12 Neighbourhood Partnerships created from the 17 new multi-member Council wards. Included in them will be the ward councillors, an equivalent number of representatives from community councils or similar local organisations, and from the Police, Fire Service, Health Board and voluntary organisations.

Portobello and Craigmillar Community Council members have met to discuss how they

will work together in their new Partnership. They have found much common ground and have submitted a joint response to a consultative Council paper on the Partnerships.

Control of the following services will be devolved to the Partnerships: environmental health, trading standards, anti-social behaviour, local roads and road works, parks, waste, building services, housing regeneration and libraries. Five Community Planning Areas, each with a Neighbourhood Manager, will oversee their daily running, and an overall citywide view will be taken by the Community Planning Partnership for Edinburgh - the Edinburgh Partnership.

Many aspects of the day-to-day working of the Partnerships still have to be decided:

for example, how will Council employees meet and work with volunteer community representatives? The roles of Council staff will become more flexible to enable them to accommodate any changes to services requested by the Partnerships, as control of these services will be from the community up, not from the Council down.

It is to be hoped that these changes truly will result in services developing according to community needs.

(For more information see www.edinburgh.gov.uk/communityplanning)

Margaret Munro,
Vice Chairperson,
Portobello Community Council

ARTISTS MOVE INTO 'POWERHOUSE'



Photo by Eilidh Bateman

SCOTTISH Power's former Portobello Learning and Conference Centre has become home to a group of city artists, with 40 painters, film makers, designers and textile artists using the building for studios and public exhibitions.

The arts and education trust, Out of the Blue, have struck a deal with site owners BL Developments for rent-free access until planning permission for redevelopment of the site is obtained. BL have said they hope to be able to find permanent space for the studios within the new development. The trust lost their long-term home in Edinburgh's New Street last year when the former bus depot was demolished.

James Metcalfe, a portrait artist who rents a studio in the Powerhouse, loves working there: "The light is great and I have found Portobello a really welcoming place - it feels like coming to quite a distinct community", he says. He added that Out of the Blue not only make it affordable to get a space to work, but are sensitive about choosing locations where the presence of artists can contribute to the local community and environment.

SITES ANNOUNCED FOR NEW SCHOOLS

AFTER wide public consultation on the contentious issue of site options for a new Portobello High School and St John's Primary School, cross-party agreement was reached at a Council meeting on 21st December 2006 that a new High School should be built in the south-west corner of Portobello Park, at the junction of Park Avenue and Milton Road. St John's could then be rebuilt on the current High School site, subject to a further report on new-build versus refurbishment of the primary school.

The agreement was subject to the condition that local land would be identified for the provision of open space to compensate for the loss of part of the Park.

An assurance was again given that no housing would be built on the remaining area of Portobello Park or the Golf Course to offset the cost of building; a case for funding will instead, be made to the Scottish Executive.

The agreement will also be subject to confirmation that the Park can be built on. Portobello Park Action Group (PPAG) has received legal opinion that it is common good land and that there would be limitations on what the Council is entitled to do there. The Council is to seek its own legal opinion on the matter and PPAG are prepared to challenge it in court, if necessary.

During the consultation period nearly 800 local people attended three public meetings and voiced strongly held and conflicting views on suitable sites, and hundreds of written submissions were made to Councillors and the Council Executive.



This early 1950s postcard shows a quiet Portobello High Street, Joppa, before traffic became such a problem. (See 'Portobello Postcard Gallery' on page 2).

ROAD WORKS CAUSE TRAFFIC CHAOS

WORK on the removal of the Milton Road roundabout, which is expected to take at least 20 weeks, is causing traffic chaos in Portobello and Milton, and not only in the 'rush hours'. With Portobello High Street gridlocked for much of the day, the ongoing work on pavements, and the loss of the No.12 bus, local traders are feeling the pinch. "Just getting into the High Street has become such a hassle that customers are going elsewhere to shop", said Sheila Scott of the Portobello Traders Association. "We managed to stop the superstore, but what can we do about the roadworks?"

The replacement of the roundabout with a four-way junction with traffic lights and pedestrian crossings is intended to give priority to buses and improve safety for pedestrians. There will also be improved bus shelters with information, in due course, on bus arrivals. Work will then begin on the Duddingston Road roundabout.

Work on the King's Road roundabout will not start until the others are completed. There is expected to be a few months respite, so it may not start until after the Edinburgh Festival, but going on over Christmas and the New Year, into 2008

NEW VOTING SYSTEM FOR COUNCIL ELECTIONS

THE voting system for the local council elections to be held in Scotland on Thursday 3rd May 2007 has been reformed, and councillors will now be elected under the Single Transferable Vote (STV) system, which is a form of Proportional Representation (PR).

Along with this, new multi-member wards have been created in which voters will elect three or four councillors, depending on the size of the electorate. The number of wards in Edinburgh will be reduced from 58 to 17, but the total number of councillors remains the same. Political parties may put forward more than one candidate in a ward.

New wards in our area are

Portobello/Craigmillar (formerly Portobello, Milton and Craigmillar) and Craigminty/Duddingston (which includes Mountcastle and Restalrig); three councillors will be elected in each. Now, instead of putting a cross against one person, voters will number their choices in order of preference, to a maximum of three or four, and seats will be allocated on a directly proportional basis. Putting crosses will invalidate a voting paper.

Although many people disagree, the Electoral Reform Society, who campaigned for this system, believes that it will increase the voting power of every elector and give voters "more choice over who their

representatives will be", allowing them "to vote for candidates rather than parties" and "make choices between candidates of the same party". For further information on STV visit www.electoral-reform.org.uk

Make sure you are registered to vote by checking the electoral register at the local library, or by contacting the Electoral Registration Office on 334 2500. Libraries, main Council offices or the Electoral Registration Office all have the simple forms. The register is updated every month and the cut-off date for the May elections is 18th April.

PORTY PROFILE No. 26
MAL & LEIGH

Mal Burkinshaw and Leigh Bagley gave up top design careers in London and Europe in search of the lifestyle of their dreams and they have found it in Portobello. After working for prestigious companies such as Calvin Klein and Benetton, Mal and Leigh wanted to move away from fashion mass production and explore their own style and creativity, and they wanted to do it from Scotland. They moved to Portobello in 2002 and now divide their time between teaching at the art colleges in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and working on their own designs in fashion and interiors.



Photo by Eilidh Bateman

They admit that it can be hard to make an impact based in Scotland, but wouldn't exchange the pace of life they now have. The pair feel strongly about only producing two or three of each item in their collections: "You lose something in mass production. The care and attention is not there," they say. It was their goal to run a small design business from home and Portobello has provided the right environment to make this a success: "The quality of the work we do is affected by our lifestyle, and being able to sit and sew at the kitchen table while looking out over the sea has definitely influenced what we produce".

Mal and Leigh envisage a kind of fashion community growing up in Portobello. Many of their friends and colleagues have also been attracted to a life here. "We feel that Portobello is a sort of hidden treasure. People don't think about the seaside when they think of Edinburgh and they're always surprised and delighted to find it," said Leigh.

They'd like to see Portobello becoming a bit more cosmopolitan, where a high-end design shop wouldn't be out of place, although they have been impressed by what is already available. They shop on the High Street regularly and have even been able to find the specialist art materials needed for a project. "You can find everything you need in Portobello, and people talk to you too," said Mal.

For Mal and Leigh, finding a home with such a strong sense of community has given them extra confidence in their decision to establish a career in Scotland: "The sea brings people together. You start to recognise people and there's a shared sense of belonging and security." They plan to continue making Portobello their home as well as an inspiration for their work.

Eilidh Bateman

ON THE BEAT

CRIME was not too bad in our area over the Christmas period, but despite the apparent lull, I would like to advise one and all, in particular our more senior residents, of an unwelcome consequence of the prolonged period of high winds in January.

Bogus workmen, who prey on the elderly and infirm all year round, revel in the aftermath of bad weather. They will cold call on householders pointing out loose or missing roof tiles, dislodged guttering, broken tree branches and any other apparent wind damage, which whether real or not, is used to their advantage. Some will offer to carry out repairs which will be of sub-standard quality, and charge an exorbitant amount. They will often use intimidating tactics to obtain further payments if they think they can get away with it, claiming that the damage was worse than initially assessed or, if the victim has poor eyesight, the damage may not even exist.

Then there is the individual who works with an unseen partner and, having called on the elderly occupier, invites them out into the garden to survey the "serious damage to their property", while their colleague sneaks in through the open door and carries out a well-practised search for any valuables. After a minute or two the caller leaves, usually saying that he will come back – but he never does, because he already has his payment.

If you are a tenant, report any damage to your landlord. If you are a homeowner, call a reputable tradesman, either from the Yellow Pages or one recommended by a friend.

Insp. Norman Ward

SEARCH YOUR CUPBOARDS!

A **BUCHAN** Lothian Dairy cream pot sold recently at auction for £6,600. This extremely rare, narrow necked pot was in perfect condition, with the Buchan Pottery mark plainly seen beside the lip. What was even more extraordinary was that this pot was previously purchased at auction, in a box of mixed Scottish stoneware, at only £12 for the box. The recent price paid for this pot reflects that there are less than 10 known to be in existence, with most having some damage. This particular pot was described as "STUNNING". So, for those of you who frequent car boot sales and auctions – it is still possible to find rare treasures that may one day make your fortune!

COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

PORTOBELLO Community Council is one of the most effective in the city. It consists of elected members and representatives of local groups. Members of the Community Council will participate in the new Neighbourhood Partnership (see page one).

It meets on the last Monday of each month, except August and December at 7.30pm in the Baptist Hall in the High Street.

Minutes can be read in Portobello Library or online at www.porty.org.uk

It is open to members of the public and anyone who would like an item discussed should call 669 6823 or email N.Stroud@ed.ac.uk

NEWS IN BRIEF

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED: The Sue Ryder Care shop in Portobello urgently needs volunteers. If you would like to find out more, call Fiona at the shop on 657 9642 or drop in to see her. They would also welcome donations of unwanted Christmas gifts.

MAKE A NAPPY CHANGE: The Edinburgh and Lothians Real Nappy Project provides help and advice on using real nappies on your baby. They also offer Trial Packs, Lending Kits, and vouchers for low-income families. You could save up to £500 by using real nappies rather than disposables. They are easy to use and help reduce the millions of disposables that go to landfill. For more information or an application form contact Changeworks on Tel: 0131 555 4010 or Email: realnappies@changeworks.org.uk

PORTOBELLO SUPPORTS FAIR TRADE: Scotmid and The Just World Shop have joined forces to promote Fairtrade Fortnight, Monday 26th February to Saturday 10th March. Scotmid, as one of Scotland's leading retailers of Fairtrade, are offering substantial discounts on Fairtrade products during this period. This will be complemented by a promotion by The Just World Shop in the Scotmid Bath Street store on the morning of Saturday 3rd and 10th March, explaining the benefits of buying Fairtrade products.

For further information contact The Just World Shop 54 Portobello High Street. Tel: 669 8819 or email: bairdj@hotmail.co.uk

BOWLING NEWS: The East Edinburgh Bowling Association AGM held at Brunstane Bowling Club on 23rd January 2007 appointed A Skirving (Portobello BC) President, J Robertson (Jessfield BC) Vice President and P Watson (Postal BC) Secretary. Early season fixtures at Portobello BC, Lee Crescent are: Edinburgh and Leith Secretaries 27th May, 2.30pm; Maule Ass., 7th July. Please come and watch. Should you wish to learn, coaching is available for all ages over 10 years. Thanks to our sponsors Belhaven Brewery and K Morrison. For more information call Alex Skirving on 657 2321.

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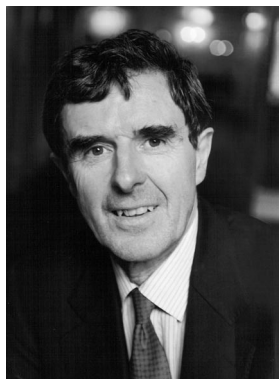
and at **AUGUSTINE UNITED CHURCH, 41 George IV Bridge** on
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You may also make an appointment to discuss a problem or raise an
issue with Gavin Strang.

Please phone 669 6002 or write to

Gavin Strang MP
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SCOTTISH POWER SITE SURVEY RESULTS

IN December, site owners BL Developments commissioned independent consultants to assess the views of Portobello residents on how it should be redeveloped and the results were presented to Portobello Community Council on 26th February. The survey was based on nearly 800 questionnaires returned out of 6000 distributed. This is an excellent sample of the population and is the widest consultation of residents since the PCATS campaign against the superstore proposal. Initial results of the survey clearly show that housing is the favoured option for the land, with a smaller number in favour of including small shops, cafes/restaurants, a hotel and leisure centre; two of the least favoured are a supermarket or more commercial shed-like units. A full breakdown of the results can be seen at Portobello Library.

These results will be a source of key information for a consultant commissioned by City of Edinburgh Council to look at the wider area around the site in West Portobello.

This project was expected to start on 1st March and take about 14 weeks. The Community Council will actively support the project to make sure that as many local residents and businesses as possible get their views heard, and that we reach a well thought out outline proposal or plan that leads to a successful and popular redevelopment of the area.

Robert Gatliff, Chair, Portobello Community Council

PORTY GOES PURPLE

INDEPENDENT food retailers in Portobello High Street took part in 'Purple Love Week' 2007 from 10th-7th February, when around 600 outlets across the UK joined forces to showcase the attractions and importance of smaller independent shops.

Tasty samples were on offer all week at Kitchener's Deli and Findlay's butchers, and Select Fine Cuisine prepared a special 'Purple Love' menu, using produce from

Findlay's and John Williamson's fishmongers, with the recipes on cards, to be tried at home. Purple balloons and ribbons advertised the event in contrast with the red used for Valentine's Day.

Kath Morrill at the Deli, who organised the event locally, said: "It was great fun and well supported by local people. We hope to do it again next year".

TOWN SCHEME GRANTS STILL AVAILABLE

THE Portobello Town Scheme gives grants for the repair and restoration of listed and unlisted properties within the Portobello Conservation Area. Grants are available of up to 50% of the cost of restoring or reinstating traditional external features, such as sash and case windows, cast iron railings and so on. The normal maximum grant is £3000 and work must be completed and invoices submitted by 28th February 2008. For further information and application forms contact the Council's planning department on 469 3770 or email: guarav.sharma@edinburgh.gov.uk

In 2006 grants were made for the restoration of Portobello's first civic clock, which was removed from the Baptist Church building in the High Street (the original Town Hall) some time ago. There will be a further delay, however, before it can be re-installed, as supporting stonework on the building has been found to be in need of repair.

THE AGM of Portobello Lifelong Learning Forum (PLLFF) will be held on Tuesday 13th March at 1.30-3pm in the Community Room. All members are welcome. Contact Linda Kelly on 657 2607 if you wish to become a member. PLLF is a local charity set up to promote learning in Portobello and North East Edinburgh. The PLLF puts on a Festival of Learning every year in September to showcase learning opportunities.

Free computer classes on Mondays, 2-3pm, until end of March include: Letter Writing, Word 2, Tables, Internet 2, Using a Scanner, PowerPoint, Family History. Tel. 529 5558 for more information.

Rhyme Time, for mothers, toddlers and babies continues on Wednesdays from 10.30-11am, now in the upstairs room.

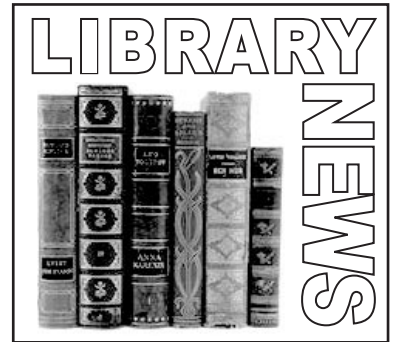
Two author events will be held at the Library in May, as part of Edinburgh City Libraries and Information Service's Festival of Scottish Writing programme. These are free events - no tickets necessary:

Local author Louisa Waugh will talk about her latest book, *Selling Olga - Stories of Human Trafficking and Resistance*, published 2006, on Saturday 12th May at 2.30-3.30pm. (*Hearing Birds Fly*, about her year in Mongolia, won the Royal Society of Literature Ondaatje Prize in 2004 for the book that best evoked the spirit of a place)

Lara Boyd will talk about her book *Giving Your Baby the Best Start* on food, recipes and so on, on Tuesday 22nd May at 10.30-11.30am.

A big "Thank you" to Isa McTiernan and Karen Kilgallen, the cheerful volunteers who have kept Portobello Toy Library going on Monday mornings. The Toy Library has been run by a charity, Edinburgh Toy Libraries group, for the last six years. Charities have a lot more paperwork to do nowadays, and the Edinburgh Organiser Susan Sheavills has reluctantly decided to give this up. They have all worked so hard, and deserve praise and thanks. We really hope a new organiser can be found, as so many mums (and children) could get toys here.

Over the past four months, four high school pupils have been gaining work experience in the library: - Calum Campbell, Rosie Luckett, Sukhpreet Hothi, and Kimberley Ross. This has varied from a couple of days, to one day a week, either for school work or the Duke of Edinburgh's award, and they have been shown how to do a variety of library jobs. It has been lovely having them here, and their reactions to the work have been encouraging. Anne McIntosh, who has been helping the Duke of Edinburgh nominee, Sukhpreet, said: "It's been a real pleasure working with such a lovely young person who is so quick and eager to learn new skills."



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QUEENS BAY LODGE

CHARLES JENNER the founder of the famous Edinburgh department store, bought Easter Duddingston Lodge, now known as Queens Bay Lodge, and its extensive grounds, in 1874 and over the next three years spent large sums of money reconstructing and enlarging the house. The Edinburgh Room at the Central Library in George IV Bridge holds a brochure prepared when the property was put up for sale in 1894 that describes the lavish interior. However, Charles Jenner also created an outstanding garden that drew visitors from all over the world. The following extract from W Allan MacLean's history of St Philip's Church and Parish tells us why:



The famous Rock Garden.

"Mr Jenner also extended the grounds until they covered over eight acres, and laid out one of the most wonderful gardens in the region, which is also described in detail in the 1894 brochure. Its principal features were: (1) The Woodland Arboretum, containing many specimens of home and foreign trees and shrubs. (2) The Rock Garden, believed to be the parent of all the rock gardens of this type since formed in various parts of the country. It contained hundreds of choice plants in soil and conditions specially suited to their culture, and set in slabs of rock which were probably among the last to be taken from the near-by Joppa Quarry. (3) Alpine Beds of saxifrages, gentians, pinks, anemones, primulas, etc. (4) The Hardy Fernery, which was a long range of building, open in front and covered with plate-glass overhead, for the special culture of British ferns. (5) The Iris Garden, containing, in addition to English, Spanish and German irises, many Japanese irises imported direct from Japan. (6) The last addition to the garden, the Climber Garden, made up of some fifty circular beds, surrounded by gravel. In the centre of each bed was a tall spruce fir to support the plants, which included climbing roses, jasmines, Virginian creepers, tropaeolums, clematis, etc. In addition there were a kitchen garden and orchard, with several greenhouses. Another feature of interest, not mentioned in the 1894 brochure, is a line of five ornamental pillars, illustrating different styles of architectural columns—Tuscan, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian and Composite".

Unfortunately, in the 30 years since Mr MacLean's book was published the pillars have become victims of neglect. Three only appear to survive more or less in one piece, although how intact they are is hard to determine underneath their covering of ivy.

Since being taken over by the Church of Scotland in 1960 the building of new residential and care facilities has diminished the Queen's Bay gardens so that little remains apart from the main lawn, some majestic trees and a bit of woodland with Spring flowers. There are many, unarguably more pressing, calls on limited funds but it would be a splendid remembrance of Charles Jenner if the means could be found to restore the pillars to something like their original condition.

AF

PROGRESS ON POTTERY KILNS

ALTHOUGH there is not a great deal to see on the ground, progress towards restoration of the partially collapsed 1909 kiln is being made.



Photo by Archie Foley

The damaged kiln is well protected against the elements.

As reported in our last issue the site was cleared of rubble, made safe and salvaged bricks shrink wrapped and removed to safe storage. The Council also appointed consultants who produced a report on the proposed initial remedial works required to allow further investigation to take place, and to safeguard the structure to prevent further deterioration. It was also decided that the Council would take this opportunity to investigate the condition of the 1906 kiln and arrange for any works required in conjunction with the repair of the 1909 kiln.

Repairs to both kilns will be carried out in a two-phased process. The first phase of repairs, which has been completed, involved the erection of a protection system based on an external scaffold structure roofed and walled to give full weather and security protection. This provides the protection required, does not compromise the structure and affords full inspection provision. Lockable doors in the cladding face allow access to the kiln as required. The breaking-in to both kilns, removal of debris and more detailed investigatory work will now take place.

This second phase of the repairs will be undertaken by conservation professionals, Simpson & Brown, Architects, who will lead a design team responsible for the research, investigation, design, procurement and supervision of the required long-term repairs to both kilns. This will be a lengthy process. A spokesman for the City of Edinburgh Council stressed: "The architects must have time to investigate the kilns' condition and the various repair options open. This may include taking advice from such diverse sources as the remaining Scottish brick producers, the Gladstone Pottery museum in Stoke On Trent (which incorporates a number of kilns), Scottish Lime Centre Trust etc. It will also be dependent on the condition of both the 1909 and 1906 kilns which will not be fully known until after the investigatory works. Historic Scotland will also wish to have input to any repair scheme proposals as their approval is a legal requirement. In short, we want to do this repair properly and as such it will take some time to pull together all the various strands. I am anxious to dispel any view that these buildings will be quickly and easily repaired. That would be misleading. They are iconic and important buildings and as such deserve to be treated properly".

The Working Group coordinating the project is also investigating the possibility of holding a public meeting at a venue in Portobello to update local residents and interested parties on the history and importance of the kilns, their condition and the proposed repairs. This will take place after the full investigation of their current condition and when the architects have had time to consider and recommend alternative repair proposals. It is to be hoped that at this time some indication of a completion date for the restoration will be given.

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PORTOBELLO POSTCARD GALLERY



LOCAL resident Margeorie Mekie is a collector of Scottish postcards, with a particular interest in old postcards of Portobello. A selection of these is included in her book *Old Portobello*, published in 1999 and still available.

Margeorie has now kindly given permission for this unique collection to be made available on the community website, Portobello Online, so that others may enjoy this treasure trove of images, many dating from the early 1900s and some never previously published. Many of Portobello's streets, parks and buildings are depicted, along with typical donkey, sandcastle and other beach scenes, one of which is seen here.

There are over 1000 postcards to be scanned and this will take months to complete, but many can currently be viewed by going to www.porty.org.uk/forum and selecting The Postcard Gallery. Other postcards are also on the Gallery, courtesy of John Stewart whose 1950s street scene is on the front page of this issue.

The feedback so far has been very positive and the Gallery is being particularly enjoyed by many elderly people throughout the city and further afield, who have happy memories of holidays at Edinburgh's seaside.

Also attracting a great deal of interest is edited footage of Tony King's amateur films of community events dating from the early 1980s, including Joppa Kids, Royal Wedding street parties and Victorian Weekends. If you have a broadband connection, these can be viewed on 'Portobello Telly' at www.porty.org.uk/tv

Bob Jefferson

WHERE WAS SIR HARRY BORN?



NO. 3 BRIDGE STREET, PORTOBELLO, NEAR EDINBURGH, WHERE I WAS BORN
I am standing at the door.

MR CHRISTOPHER (Chick) Jack emailed the Reporter from Edmonton, Alberta when he heard that number 3 Bridge Street, popularly known as Harry Lauder Cottage, was up for sale. He has a particular interest in the property because it was the home of his great grandfather Robert H Jack in the latter half of the 19th century. Then the building was divided into two very small dwellings that were only converted into a single home comparatively recently. Mr Jack asserts: "The commemorative plaque has been placed on the south half of the duplex, which at the time was R H Jack's house...and if it were moved to the right of the existing front door it would be in the proper location representing the correct half of the duplex that Harry was born in".

Where Harry Lauder was actually born has been the subject of local controversy over many years. As shown in the photograph published in 1928 he claimed it was 3 Bridge Street, which was the home of his mother's parents, but this has been hotly disputed over the years by some Portobello citizens who alleged that he had been taken there shortly after birth having been born elsewhere. Bridge Street Lane has been suggested, among others, as a location. Unfortunately no evidence, other than of the anecdotal sort, appears to have ever been produced to support the claims. We know for certain that Lauder's MacLennan grandparents did live in one half of the Bridge Street property also occupied by Mr Jack's forebears. What does exist is his entry in the statutory Register of Births, but even that is not conclusive. It states that Henry [sic] MacLennan Lauder was born on 4th August 1870 in Bridge Street, Portobello but no house number is given. There the matter rests unless and until someone produces irrefutable documentary evidence to settle this issue once and for all.

PORTOBELLO HISTORY SOCIETY NEWS

AFTER our Christmas and New Year break, meetings recommenced in February, with Professor Harry Dickinson presenting his talk on Thomas Muir and the 'Scottish Radical Martyrs' of the 1790s. Harry gave an enlightening description of the actions and journeys of Thomas Muir and his companions, with the unfairness of their treatment vividly portrayed. He encouraged members to visit the obelisk in Calton Cemetery commemorating these martyrs.

On Wednesday, 7th March the Society will be visited by Winnie Stevenson, who uses original Victorian equipment to present Phantasmagoria - The Traditional Magic Lantern Show. This promises to be both an entertaining and informative slide show.

Dr. Chris Fogwill visits the Society on Wednesday, 4th April with a talk entitled In the footsteps of W.S. Bruce. Working in the Modern Antarctic Survey. Perhaps further evidence of global warming, and the ways in which our modern lifestyles are affecting the planet, will be presented.

Our speaker on Wednesday 2nd May will talk about something more local, with Edinburgh Lost and Found the topic for Archie Blyth. There is always something new and intriguing to find out about our capital city.

Our AGM is on Wednesday 6th June. Unfortunately the promised speaker is unable to attend, and an alternative is yet to be arranged.

Our annual Society outing is booked for Saturday, 12th May. This year we are visiting Anstruther, with a visit to The Scottish Fisheries Museum an optional extra. Members will have High Tea at The Craw's Nest before they return home after what should prove to be an interesting and enjoyable day.

Meetings are held in St. John's Church Hall in Brighton Place and begin at 7pm. Non-members are welcome, but remember to come early to make sure of a seat.

M.M.

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PORTOBELLO AMNESTY

WORLD Human Rights Day was marked by the Portobello Group with a Tree of Hope stall on the High Street on 9th December, when over 50 cards were written by members of the public and Gavin Strang MP, sending messages of friendship and hope to thousands of prisoners of conscience and their families.

Just before this, the Group were overjoyed to learn that Gospel singer Helen Berhane had been released after being held in a transport container in Eritrea, where practising Christians are imprisoned and ill-treated. Amnesty supporters had written thousands of letters on her behalf.

Amnesty has a special programme highlighting the humanitarian crisis of genocide in Darfur and the Portobello Group has mounted a display of photographs which vividly illustrate this, in the Evergreen Shop in the High Street. Cards are available that can be sent to embassies of states which might help resolve this crisis. It is hoped that Reporter readers will visit the display.

The Group will hold its annual Coffee Morning on Saturday 10th March in the URC Church Hall, Marlborough Street, from 10am-12noon. The young people of the local Woodcraft Folk will organise children's games and activities; gifts of books, bric-a-brac and baking will be welcome. For more information, call 669 1308.

David Turner

WHAT'S ON

POP QUIZ & DISCO: Friday 16th March, 7.30pm at Beach Lane Social Club, organised by Portobello Park Action Group. Bar, snacks and Grand Raffle draw. Tickets £5 (£4 conc.) from Kitchener's Deli.

PORTOBELLO QUAKERS meet on the last Sunday of each month in Portobello Old Parish Church (Café area), Marlborough St, at 7.30pm. Visitors are warmly welcomed.

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will be available most Mondays at **PORTOBELLO TOWN HALL** at 6pm
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PORTOBELLO BENEVOLENT SOCIETY

We printed an article in our December 2005 issue on the history and work of the Portobello Benevolent Society from its foundation in 1830 until its dissolution in 2005. This report completes the story.

In March 2005, the committee recognised that the time had come to wind up the affairs of the Society. This was to be done over a period of time dictated by the maturity dates of the remaining investments. The final amount realised raised from the assets of the Society was directed to support other organisations with similar charitable interests. Over the past two years, £13,235 has been disbursed among existing personal beneficiaries, Portobello's Citizens'

Advice Bureau, Compassionate Friends, Orcadia Creative Learning Centre, Portobello Monday Centre, Portobello Older People's Project, Portobello Performing Arts Group, Portobello Sunshine Senior Citizens' Club, Porto Youth Scene, St. Vincent de Paul Society, St. John's Thursday Club and ST Mark's Church. For more than 175 years, the Benevolent Society helped to improve the lives of local people. The good work done has been marked by a commemorative plaque presented to St Mark's Church on Sunday 26th February 2006, which is now displayed in the church vestibule.

The Society's records will be presented to the City Archivist for safe keeping.

Bob Aitken, Chairman

WATER OF LIFE

A **WATER FESTIVAL**, organized by the Portobello and District Council of Churches, will take place in St Philips Church Hall on Saturday 24th March from 10.30am to 4pm. Its aim is to raise awareness of, and celebrate water as a resource on which we all depend for life; as something to be conserved, used and shared justly to meet the needs of all, but also as a power of nature from which we sometimes need to protect ourselves and others. For many people water is also a symbol of great spiritual significance.

Scottish Water will be represented, as well as community agencies and groups, including Friends of the Earth, the World Development Movement, World Wide Fund for Nature, Christian Aid, Aquaid, Practical Action and Rotary, who will present their perspectives and activities related to water issues worldwide, through stalls, talks and films.

Local schools, youth groups, drama and music groups will interest and entertain people of all ages, and local artists will exhibit paintings, crafts and sculpture. The churches will have an information stall and will provide refreshments all day, including a light lunch if required.

Admission is free, although donations will be welcome. Any surplus after expenses will go to a cause related to the themes of the day. Come along and bring the family. For more information call 669 1308.

David Turner

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The Portobello Reporter is produced by a group of volunteers, with contributions in this issue from 38 members of the community. If you have a story to tell or an event to publicise call 669 3466 or email us at portyreporter@btinternet.com

June deadline 7th May 07

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PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY CENTRE NEWS

THE new reception/office is now complete, with new flooring in the entrance, small hall, ladies toilets and kitchen, plus a new cooker. The old office will become a new meeting room. Bookings are now being taken for this room.

Because of the building work some groups have been off so:

Welcome back:

Drop-in Computer Sessions - Thursdays, 1- 4pm. Free.

Baby Massage - Fridays, 11.15am-12.15, £4: for all babies from 8 weeks to crawling.

Capoeira - Fridays, 5.15-6.15pm, £2.

Art Club - Monday evening, 7- 9pm

New activities:

Pottery Classes - Tuesdays, 1.30-3.30pm, £4.00. Beginners welcome
Pottery Users Group - Mondays, 10am-5pm: for potters with enough expertise who would like to work on their own or as part of a self help group. Contact Centre for more information on equipment, materials, etc.

Places available in Bev's fun gentle exercise class, Thurs, 10-11.30am, £2.

Kids' Stuff - still running, and with spaces available:

Enjoyaball - Non-competitive ball skills for 4-9 year olds (and pre-school).

Karate - Wednesdays, for 6+, 5.30-6.30pm, and Saturdays 10am-12. Register your interest for Arts, Crafts and Pottery sessions for children.

Adult Arts and Crafts/Textiles/Jewellery sessions coming soon. Want to knit, sew, etc. tell us?

Meditation & Healing - Sunday afternoons - free, enquiries to Centre.

Volunteers wanted to help with Senior Social Club coffee mornings on Saturdays - on a rota basis, so not every week. This provides a meeting place, a chance to chat and see old friends, for some of the older folk in the community - guaranteed fun. Everyone welcome.

Volunteers for the Youth Club also welcomed.

Come into the Centre and see what is happening, meet the staff, have a coffee - join a class!

Tel: 0131 669 8275, email enquiries@portobello.cc or visit the website www.portobello.cc

Portobello Community Centre, 3 Adelphi Grove, Edinburgh EH15 1AP

CHRISTIAN AID EVENTS AND NEWS

IN Christian Aid Week, 13th-19th May, the following events will take place locally:-

Dedication Service, Sun. 13th May, 6.30pm, Baptist Church, Portobello High St. The speaker will be Revd Alan Montgomery.

Coffee Morning Celebration, Sat. 19th May, 10.30am-1pm, St Mark's Church, Portobello High St.

A Coffee Morning will be held on Sat. 21st April, 10am. St James Church hall.

St John's Primary School pupils will give a stimulating start to the day with some well-known World War songs.

Funds raised : Thanks to the people of Portobello who helped raise £15,137 in the last financial year. This year's successful Old Parish Church Burns Supper raised £1075.

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'VIRTUAL LEARNING' AT ROYAL HIGH



TWO 11-year-old pupils from The Royal High Primary School recently went to London to talk to education specialists from around the world about the technology being used at their school. Austin Noble and Isaac Nicol-Smith went to the British Education and Training Technology show at Olympia in January to talk about Studywiz, which the school is using to enhance and support traditional teaching methods.

Studywiz is a secure 'Virtual Learning Environment' that makes teaching and learning resources available to pupils and teachers online, anytime and anywhere. This means that pupils can work on assignments, view class material and even take tests outside the classroom, and there is a gallery for the showing and sharing of paintings, photographs, audio and movies.

"Children are eager and enthusiastic about learning with Studywiz and are developing confidence in taking on responsibility," said Janet Wallace, the school's ICT Co-ordinator. "It also allows parents access to their children's work, a very popular feature". As one parent put it, "Studywiz has been a great learning tool for my son's P7 European Union project, as he was able to safely search the web and also ask fellow pupils for help."

So successful has been the school's use of Studywiz that they were invited by its producers, Etech, to present it at the show. Austin and Isaac are seen here demonstrating it to education guru Dr Stephen Heppell. JW

BUDDING JOURNALISTS REQUIRED

THE Portobello Reporter is always looking for cub reporters to contribute to this page. If you think you have a good idea for an article then all you have to do is email it to portyreporter@btinternet.com and the editor will get in touch with you.

YOUNG READERS LOVE 'KIDNAPPED'

P6 PUPILS at St John's have been enjoying Robert Louis Stevenson's 'Kidnapped' in a very novel (!) way. They are taking part in the City of Literature 'One Edinburgh One Book' project by reading the Graphic Novel version, sent free to all schools. The book with its vibrant, colourful illustrations has already proved extremely popular with the pupils, who will be exploring the storyline through a series of Drama activities. One aspect of the graphic novel, the lack of female characters, is being taken up by the girls in P6 as a challenge to solve through their Drama work - They may create their own female characters to enhance the story. The pupils will retell the story by charting David Balfour's adventures as he travels across Scotland with Alan Breck. There is no shortage of volunteers for parts, which allow the children to experience the high drama of the story with its fight scenes and sense of danger, pursuit and excitement.

Linda McGee



www.miniclip.com

This great site, a favourite of Aidan, aged 8, offers 100s of free on-line games for all ages to play. Choose from sports, action, flash, puzzle, multi-player games, and more. Give it a try.

CLIMATE CHANGE DECLARATION SIGNED AT TOWERBANK

THE Edinburgh launch of the Scottish Climate Change Declaration took place on 16th January at Towerbank Primary School. Representatives of the City of Edinburgh Council's sustainability team were present for the signing of the Declaration by Council Leader Ewan Aitken. This signals the Council's commitment to helping stop climate change. The school eco-reps were also present and were photographed with Councillor Aitken. P7 girls, Katie Tulloch and Naomi Leslie, spoke of their concerns about climate change, what Towerbank are doing to help stop it and, of how the pupils gave their full support to the Declaration.



Towerbank staff and pupils would like to encourage everybody to do their bit to help the world in which we live. Did you know, for instance, that almost half of the energy we use in our homes goes to heating it, and that if you turn down your thermostat 2° you could save about 2,000 pounds of carbon dioxide a year and cut your energy bills as well. If you are cold, put on a jumper!

Kirstie Rosie

YOUNG CONSUMERS

A TEAM of four Portobello High School pupils won a closely contested Edinburgh final of the Young Consumers of the Year Competition on 5th December 2006. Mark Melrose and Calum McKenzie (S6), and Dennis Henderson and Jamie Hendry (S5) narrowly beat teams from Boroughmuir High School, St Augustine's RC High School and Leith Academy, and will now compete in the Scottish Final on 26 March at the Royal College of Physicians in Edinburgh.

Young Consumers is a UK-wide competition in which pupils learn about consumer rights and responsibilities. Last year's UK trophy was won by Boroughmuir High School, the first ever Scottish winners in the competition's 21-year history.

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ON THE BASKETBALL COURT

THE links between Portobello High School and the City of Edinburgh Basketball Club, based in the school, continue to pay dividends to both.

Several school teams are through to the semi-finals of their Scottish cups at the time of writing, and the school is also defending four girls and one boys trophies won at last year's Schools Cup finals. The Club, too, excels in the National Leagues, with four teams topping their divisions at present.

Both School and Club continue to provide many players for District and National Teams, who have great experiences travelling to, and playing against, other countries.

The two groups are also working together off the court to try to ensure high class indoor facilities are included in the plans for the new Portobello High School.

The success of their cooperation is seen not only in the match results, but also in the numbers of teams and players involved. Basketball is available at Portobello HS from primary age 8 at the Sunday Hoops, to Seniors and 'Veterans' who play for enjoyment, with everything in between. Opportunities are also offered for Table officiating or Refereeing.

Spectators are welcome at games on Saturdays when the Club present 'Basketball Saturday' from 11am to 9pm.

Three of our senior pupils are ambassadors for the Year of Women's Basketball, and visit local primary schools, talking to pupils about the sport and what young players can achieve by becoming involved: Rowan Bell, Kara Gillies and Annie Rowan are great role models for younger players.

Brian Findlay

MEADOWBANK TO CLOSE

THE Council propose to sell the whole Meadowbank Sports Centre site for housing, and replace it with a scaled down facility on a small part of the site. With the 5-a-side football pitches in Portobello to be sold, and a new High School on Portobello Park, East Edinburgh will become seriously short of sports facilities at the same time as people are being urged to take more exercise. The Save Meadowbank Campaign, organised by a local group, have made a good

start, leafletting and petitioning outside the Centre. They collected hundreds of signatures and met with a 99% positive response, with lots of people, including many young people, wanting to get involved. The organisers are asking as many concerned people as possible to write to the Planning Department and local Councillors by 9th March. See also their website www.savemeadowbank.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk

IF you haven't made the decision to go green yet, please try this year to give up pesticides, as they kill insects, good (ladybirds, lacewings, hoverflies) as well as bad (greenfly, blackfly, vine weevil), so why not try squashing or spraying with a jet of water. Biological control works really well for slugs, greenhouse pests, etc. Herbicides kill weeds, or you could invest in mulching material if you don't make enough from your own shreds or compost - small areas can be covered with gravel, larger areas with bark.

If you're buying plants, ask if the pots are biodegradable and the plants are not in peat. If enough people just even ask, it will promote environmentally friendlier plant nurseries and reduce the plant-pot mountain. If you buy grow-bags make sure they are peat-free and, if possible, certified organic by either Garden Organic or the Soil Association, who validate the labels and ensure high standards of organic procedures and production.

Before things really get going in the garden, try to give it a good tidy up. If you haven't emptied the compost heap over the winter, do it now and mulch things that need a boost; concentrate on fruit trees, roses, newly-planted shrubs and perennials. The compost heap can now be re-filled with all the stuff left to disintegrate over the winter.

I've noticed that lots of plants that usually disappear underground in winter have stayed relatively green this year, and the decision is whether to cut them right down or not. I've decided not to and see what happens, which is a new decision for me. As this has never happened before in my 30 years gardening, could it be due to global warming? The frost could cut them back anyway, but if the gamble pays off I could have bigger, earlier-flowering plants. Weeds have also flourished in the mild weather, but pulling out as many as you can now will pay dividends later, and never allow a weed you don't like to seed.

Get seeds started now, in trays on windowsills, in the greenhouse or even a sheltered place in the garden. Use good seed compost (the only compost that I buy in) and use a hand spray-gun to water.

Look out large containers - anything that is watertight will do - and make your own comfrey juice, nettle tea, etc for tomatoes and any plant you wish to encourage to flower or fruit. Pull handfuls of leaves, cover with water, let steep for a few weeks and use diluted to the colour of weak tea.



with Susan Burns

USE OF JET SKIS UNDER REVIEW

FOLLOWING the presentation to the Scottish Parliament of a petition by Portobello Community Council to restrict the use of jet skis (which are classed as 'personal watercraft', PWCs), particularly in residential areas, there was consultation with a range of interested parties. These included Forth Ports PLC, Lothian and Borders Police, the City of Edinburgh Council, the Royal Yachting Association and the Scottish Executive. The Community Council then submitted comments on the responses of these bodies to the Public Petitions Committee on 6 February, and the Committee decided that they

should also be copied to the Scottish Executive.

Control of PWCs is governed by local bylaws, which only apply to a certain distance from the shore. Once beyond these limits their use is out-with the scope of UK maritime legislation, and is unregulated. The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) has recognised that this is unsatisfactory and is working to resolve the issues involved in the use and misuse of PWCs. The Petitions Committee also decided that the MCA should be asked to produce a timetable for action on this.

D Cairns

PORTOBELLO FLOOD STUDIES

THE City of Edinburgh Council is aware of the need to address the potential for flooding in the city due to climate change, not just on water courses such as the Figgate and Brunstane Burns, but also along the coast, including Portobello Promenade. They have already commissioned a study on "wave over-topping" to understand the risk and how to mitigate it.

A SEPA flood map of Scotland, showing parts of Portobello deemed to be at risk, is available now on www.sepa.org.uk/flooding/mapping/important.asp

Some people will remember that, before sand was pumped in to form the beach in the early 1970s, the Promenade could be flooded at high tide at certain times of year.

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