

The Portobello REPORTER

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The independent voice of Portobello

Your Community Newspaper
produced by local people since 1980.

LAUNCHING WATER SPORT

LOCAL man Jonathan Bendit has been given planning permission to open Portobello Sailing and Kayaking Club, with premises in a ground-floor flat at 55 Bath Street. He plans to set up a not-for-profit organisation that will be able to apply for funds to help establish a self-funding water sports club and, eventually, a school providing lessons in sailing and kayaking.

He hopes to open the clubhouse by early summer, by which time showers, toilets, changing rooms and lockers will have been installed. Snacks and light meals will

be available in the café, which will have WiFi connections.

Subject to confirmation of the lease and rent by City of Edinburgh Council, the large grassy area on the Prom, next to the new flats, will be fenced and dinghies and kayaks stored there for club members. Later, a hut will be erected to house a rescue boat. Access to the site will be through gates on the Prom.

Jonathan intends that members will unload their boats at the foot of Pittville Street, from where a small vehicle will tow them on a trailer along the Prom to the

site. He anticipates that craft will be stored at the club for the season and that there will be little traffic on the Prom.

Although concerns have been expressed about the loss of green space, the plans for the site, and possible disturbance to nearby residents and users of the Prom, the project has received a lot of local support. Jonathan hopes that local people will take advantage of this opportunity to become involved in water sports. "I want to make Portobello 'Sportobello'" he says.

Margaret Munro

GUIDE DOGS TRAINED IN PORTOBELLO



Photo by Lou Hardless

REGULAR users of Portobello Promenade and High Street may be familiar with the sight of obedient dogs undergoing training. These beautiful creatures with their handlers have been training in the area for the last seven years. Originally the training centre was in Forfar, which proved to be a long way from its main client group, so in 2001 the service relocated to Edinburgh and Hamilton. With these new bases it is much easier to look after Guide Dog owners in the Borders, and East and West Lothian.

Gavin Neate, a Guide Dog Mobility Instructor and Paco Vilaluilla, an apprentice Instructor explained why Portobello is such a good base for 'Guide Dogs', formerly known as 'Guide Dogs for the Blind'. The area offers a wide variety of good training areas, they say: a busy High Street with Pelican crossings, low and raised kerbs, the beach, buses, trains (at Brunstane) to Edinburgh, and a layout of housing in a grid system all of which enable the dogs to practice and develop their skills.

From a young age, dogs are socialised with families and other pets, and at a year old begin eight months of training before being matched with their future owners. Previous assessments and training takes place for both, followed by yearly aftercare visits.

If you see a Guide Dog and handler in action, please remember not to distract it and, if necessary, refer to the handler.

Lou Hardless

'COMMON GOOD' STATUS FOR PARK

A REPORT to the City of Edinburgh Council has confirmed the legal opinion obtained by the Portobello Park Action Group that, because of the history of its acquisition, Portobello Park and Golf Course are Common Good land. This means that it must remain in Council ownership, with none sold for housing, and administered in the interests of the city's residents. The land was purchased in 1898, by the City of Edinburgh Corporation, for £25,000, to fulfil their obligation under the 1896 Edinburgh Extension Act to "acquire, dedicate and thereafter maintain for public use a public park or recreation ground".

The Council is not entitled to use Common Good assets for the provision of statutory services (such as education), so if it goes ahead with the plan to build a school on the park, it will have to go to court to obtain permission, and will also have to pay into the Common Good fund an amount equal to the market value of the land. The question of where the money for a new school will come from remains unanswered.

MAGGIE RETIRES FROM COMMUNITY CENTRE

AT the end of March, Maggie Le May will retire from her post as Facilities Co-ordinator at Portobello Community Centre. "I have really enjoyed working here", she says. "I've been able to use my initiative to develop the Centre and, living locally, I've had an 'ear' in the community so that I could put on things that people wanted. I will really miss the daily contact with all the friends that I have made in Portobello".



Photo by Brenda Molony

The Centre's Management Committee have been pressing for a replacement before Maggie leaves, but at the moment, due to budget cuts, it looks as though only a six-month temporary post is planned.

Maggie has played a pivotal part in the plans for a new Centre, re-built on-site, and says "I would like to have retired with this already in progress, but I'm optimistic that it will happen soon".

In her new leisure time, Maggie plans to do more photography and art, re-plant the garden, take some interesting courses and get more exercise. Her energy and friendly manner will be greatly missed at the Centre.

B.M.

N W PORTOBELLO DESIGN FRAMEWORK

FURTHER concern has been expressed at some of the proposals in this Framework for the re-development of the Kings Road end of Portobello. Plans recently on display in the Library showed little sign that the hundreds of comments sent to Council planners following the earlier exhibition had been taken into account.

It is still proposed to move the Library along to the Power League site, and the Community Centre to the Prom, squeezed into the cafe area above the Indoor Bowls Centre. The overwhelming view is that both should remain where they are, in the centre of the community and rebuilt on site, and that any new community facilities should be additional.

It is also still proposed that the Bridge Street car park be built on, with the loss of already scarce parking for visitors; that the Baileyfield Road cottages (half of which are still privately owned) be demolished and replaced with a 'raised linear park'; and that 10-storey blocks of flats be built on the by-pass side of the former Scottish Power site. Comments were again invited by the city planners.

These plans are not actual planning applications, but a suggested framework for planners to work to over the next 15-20 years. Nevertheless, it is vitally important that the final framework constitutes what is best for Portobello and its residents.

B.M.

ANOTHER FUNFAIR?

A LICENCE application has been made for a funfair on the old Scottish Power site for 16 days over the Easter holidays. Over 150 people have objected, including local councillors and Gavin Strang MP. Residents in Baileyfield Road and many others complained about the noise from the funfair when it was there last April, as well as the traffic, parking problems, and anti-social behaviour associated with it. They say they were unable to object to last year's application because, as normal consultation procedures were not followed, nobody in Portobello knew about it. This was confirmed in a reply from the Director of Corporate Service to an enquiry by Gavin Strang MP.

PORTY PROFILE No. 30 GEORGE ANDERSON

BORN in Drem, George Anderson went to Athelstaneford Primary School and North Berwick High, but he didn't really enjoy school and left at 16 to work under the head gardener at Smeaton Gardens, East Linton, a job that would lead to a long and successful career in horticulture. "I really took to it", he says, "which was not so surprising, since many of my family were keen gardeners". He also attended classes in horticulture at what is now the Scottish Agricultural College, gaining his City and Guilds, before moving on to a nursery in Lanarkshire and two years in its tomato houses.



Photo by Brenda Molony

By 1966 George had decided he wanted to work in an advisory capacity, so he started a 3-year student gardener Diploma course at the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh, passing with credit. He was to remain there until he retired. His first post was that of practical demonstrator and foreman in charge of student plots and plant identification, but that was not sufficiently demanding, so he completed a teacher training course in Wolverhampton, on secondment, and returned to the Botanics to teach.

In 1984 he set up and headed the School for Horticulture, to teach horticulture to landscape students, then in 1995 he created the HND in Horticulture with Plantsmanship - the first in the UK.

When he retired in 2004, instead of taking it easy, George said "Yes" to lots of things. As well making regular appearances on BBC Scotland's *Beechgrove Garden*, he is President of the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society, Vice-chair of the Advisory Committee for Scotland in Bloom and the annual Gardening Scotland show, and a member of several education committees. "These are all very interesting", he says, "and allow me to keep my hand in and follow initiatives started". He was awarded an MBE for Services to Horticulture in 2005.

In his 'spare time', George is an Elder at St Philips Church, tends his allotment, shoots, and fishes. He is also no mean cook, to the delight of his wife, Gill. They moved to Joppa with their young family in 1976, but George has only recently had a garden of his own. He is filling it with lots of unusual plants "to see if they will grow well outside the Botanics", and says "the climate here is almost Mediterranean - terrific for growing a great range of plants!"

B.M

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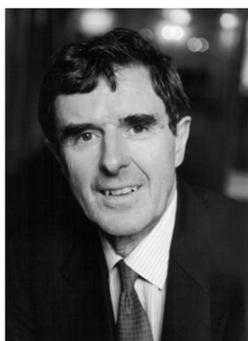
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Please phone 669 6002 or write to

Gavin Strang MP
Constituency Office
54 Portobello High Street
Edinburgh, EH15 1DA

email: gillana@parliament.uk
www.gavinstrangmp.co.uk

PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY CENTRE NEWS

WE have a new exercise class, Funky Fit, on Mondays at 7pm. It puts the fun into fitness. Paper Craft, Mosaic and Pottery classes are running as usual.

See our new website www.portobellobtik.com for all our news. Can't use a computer? - Drop-in sessions will start again soon, with some updated equipment. We received a grant from Portobello/Craigmillar Neighbourhood Partnership for this, some new furniture and sports equipment.

We now have a gallery/meeting room in the refurbished old office and welcome enquiries from local artists interested in exhibiting. The first exhibition was *Two Voices* by local photographer Rosita McKenzie. Her next, entitled *Temptation Denied* is on until 22nd March and gives a blind person's view of shops in Portobello, with tactile interpretations by Camilla Adams. Rosita was assisted by David Grinley. Artists' talks and workshops are planned. Contact me for information.

Following further discussions with our architects, the building group, Management Committee and our local councillors are preparing a motion to the Council. The draft is as follows: "Council calls for a report, within one cycle, from the Chief Executive on the feasibility - in principle - of re-provisioning Portobello Community Centre and Portobello Library together on their current sites, in conjunction with affordable rented housing for elderly people, as suggested to Council officers by the management committee of Portobello Community Centre and its agents." Hopefully, by the time the next Reporter appears, our new Centre will be nearer to being realised.

A new treasurer and secretary are needed for the Committee. Would anyone willing to volunteer please contact me.

This is my last report from the Centre and I would like to say "Thank you" to all the friends, old and new, that I have made during my time here, for all their interest, help and support.

Maggie Le May

Portobello Community Centre, 669 8275.

POSITIVE 'REACT-ions' AT BRUNSTANE STATION

BLIND and partially sighted people travelling to and from Brunstane Station are benefiting from a new electronic system on the platforms designed to make rail travel easier. At an investment of £36,000, First ScotRail has installed an RNIB React system, which provides spoken messages triggered by a sensor device carried by customers, to help them find their way around the station. The system has been successfully used at Camelon and Lenzie Stations and, as there is a key RNIB support centre in the Jewel & Esk Valley College grounds, Brunstane Station is a good place for it.

John Legg, Director of RNIB Scotland, said: "Whether visiting friends and relations, taking a holiday or commuting to work, people with sight loss can face major difficulties when using public transport, especially in getting travel information. With the number of people with sight loss forecast to rise in the future, it is encouraging to see a major service provider meeting their customers' needs in this way".

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NEWS IN BRIEF

THE KING'S ROAD ROUND-ABOUT looks set to stay for a while longer. Tenders have still to go out and work on the junction is not expected to start before June or July, if then.

PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY COUNCIL meet on the last Monday of each month at 7.30pm in the Baptist Church Hall, Portobello High St. To raise an issue, contact the secretary on 669 6823. See Minutes at the Library or on the community website www.porty.org.uk

PORTOBELLO/CRAIGMILLAR NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTNERSHIP will meet on Wednesdays 23rd April in Hays Community Business Centre and 25th June in Portobello High School, both at 7pm.

PORTOBELLO RUGBY CLUB raised £6960, towards improving facilities at their re-built clubhouse on Duddingston Road West, by auctioning copies of the seven Harry Potter books signed and donated by JK Rowling.

LO-COST LOANS to improve energy efficiency: Our homes are the most expensive things we own, but while we don't mind splashing out on a new TV, we're sometimes reluctant to spend our cash on energy efficiency improvements and repairs. Reducing condensation or fitting new heating controls can help save on fuel bills, so there's more in your pocket for the nicer things in life. There are even low cost loans available to help. Call Changeworks on 0800 512 012 to find out more.

SCOTRAIL are looking for 'Friends' for Brunstane station. Groups of volunteers all over the country help to brighten up their local stations by tending flower tubs, and they hope a group can be formed for Brunstane. They will install and plant the tubs and cover basic expenses, if the volunteers will weed and water. Would anyone interested please contact Nick Stroud, on 669 6823.

FRIENDS OF PARKS work with the Council's Parks Service to help enhance and protect Edinburgh's green spaces by planting, leading walks and talks, and fund-raising for improvements and events. This gives them a greater say of what happens in their local parks. There are Friends groups for several parks, but none as yet in Portobello. For information contact Karen Hay on 469 5196 or see www.edinburgh.gov.uk/friendsofparks

LIFEBOATS: collectors needed in Portobello High St on Sat.3rd May, for just one hour each. Please call Patricia O'Neill on 669 1150 if you would like to volunteer.

MEMORIES OF PORTOBELLO: If you have any stories relating to the old Dancehall and Fun City, Duncan Flockhart would like to hear from you. He wants to record them for a short documentary film on memories of Portobello that will give an impression of the area and its history. Contact him by email at daflockhart@hotmail.com or call 07784267971 and he will come and record your recollections.

'PORTY SHOPPERS' HIT THE STREETS

PORTOBELLO's own re-usable jute 'Porty Shopper' bag is now available from many High Street shops for only £2. Local environmental group PEDAL have produced these strong bags with the help of a Waste Action Grant from the City of Edinburgh Council, to reduce the use of plastic bags and promote local shopping.

This is one way to help reduce our use of the fossil fuels that are accelerating climate change, as plastic bags are made from a by-product of oil refining. They also contribute to the huge amount of waste going to landfill sites, and add to litter problems; wildlife, especially sea birds and marine life, die in large numbers from mistaking plastic bags for food.

Supporting local shops contributes to the local economy and community and helps to reduce your 'carbon footprint', all good reasons to hit the High Street with your new 'Porty Shopper' today. You can buy one from the Just World Shop, Findlays deli and butchers, Portobello Stationers, Banana Republic, Mica Woodwares, Williamson's Fishmongers or Wisteria Lane, and the Library and Community Centre. If you belong to a group that would like to sell the bags for fundraising, please call 669 9188 or email: portycharlotte@yahoo.co.uk For information on getting involved with future PEDAL initiatives call Eva on 657 2555.

Charlotte Bickmore

"NO" TO OIL TRANSFERS IN FIRTH OF FORTH

CONTROVERSIAL proposals, reported in our Summer 2007 issue, for ship-to-ship oil transfers in the Firth of Forth have been scrapped. Forth Ports have refused permission for the pumping between tankers of almost eight million tonnes a year of Russian crude oil, and admitted that the strength of public opposition had influ-

enced their decision. The Scottish Green Party, local councils around the Firth, environmental groups, businesses and members of the public had all objected to the proposals. The RSPB and Marine Conservation Society expressed their satisfaction that an internationally important habitat will now be protected.

LIFELONG LEARNING

THE Portobello Lifelong Learning Forum, now in its seventh year, is a charity set up to develop and promote learning and activity in the area. Anyone in the community who thinks they could help in this useful work is invited to come to one of our meetings. If we had a few more members we could work on publication of a booklet to advertise all local tutors, classes and interest groups, for the benefit of everyone in the area. Links are planned with the Neighbourhood Partnership to revitalise the Forum, and we propose twin Festivals of Learning this year, rather than the one-day event which we have run for the past six years. Our next meeting date is Thursday 10th April, in the afternoon. For more details, please ask for Joyce at the Library, Linda at the Community Education Office or see Maggie at the Community Centre.

Joyce Campbell.

The Portobello Reporter is produced by volunteers, with contributions in this issue from 39 local people. If you have something to publicise or would like to advertise call 669 3466 or email us at portyreporter@btinternet.com
June deadline 7th May 08

THERE is a breath of fresh air in the library! The upstairs windows have been replaced with safety windows which, as well as being safer, allow easy ventilation over the entire screen of windows. The front windows have also been lined with film to reflect the sun's rays back, so the room will be a lot more comfortable in the summer. The work was done very efficiently over a six-week contract period by Property Care Services. If you do not know about the rooms upstairs, please ask at any time and we will show you - They are available to hire for meetings etc from £15 per session.

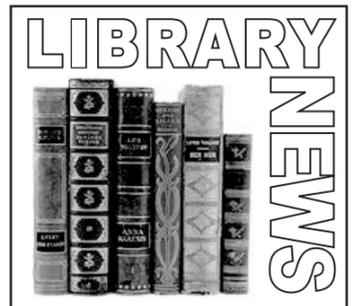
Our new Department, Services for Communities, is running a trial service in the Library: Campbell Clark, the Recycling Advisory Officer, has supplied free blue bags, Salvation army bags and replacement rain-caps for the boxes for the kerbside recycling scheme. This is proving to be quite popular and we hope it can continue.

To assist our computer users we are now selling large capacity (1GB) flash drives at £7.50 each. This is a discount price, so it is a good offer.

We have recently obtained some new Playstation games which we hope will be popular with children over the Easter holidays. Remember kids - bring your Library card with you if you wish to book a computer or the Playstation! Look out for a poster soon advertising a special craft event over Easter too.

The old PADCA bowling trophies and shields which the library has been looking after for a few years, are to get a new lease of life. They have been taken over to Jessfield Bowling Club for their tournaments - So hurry along and join!

Joyce Campbell



CONCERN AT ST JOHN'S

PARENTS of children at St John's Primary School have launched a fresh appeal for the school to be refurbished after hundreds of pupils had to be sent home on 31st January when faulty wiring caused a

burning smell. The school was closed the next day as well. St John's is one of five schools in Edinburgh waiting to be rebuilt or refurbished, and the Council has to find the money for the project.

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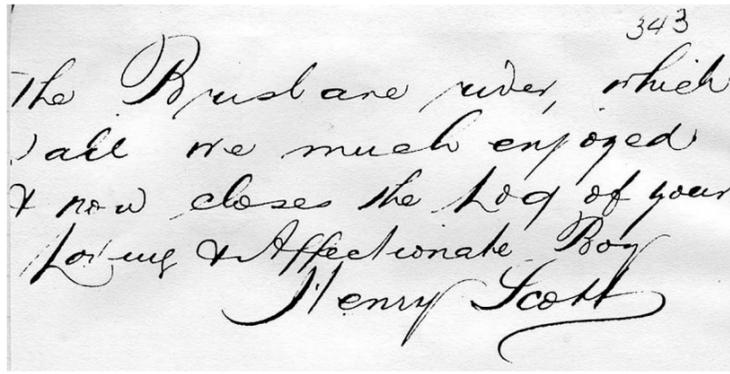
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HENRY SCOTT: EMIGRANT TO AUSTRALIA IN 1875

WHEN the sailing ship *Renfrewshire* sailed on her maiden voyage from the Clyde on 1st June 1875 carrying 280 emigrants to Queensland, one of those on board was a 28 year old bank clerk from Portobello named Henry Scott. Although he was emigrating to start a new life in Australia, Henry was travelling as a member of the crew, having been given the post of Purser for the voyage despite having no experience whatsoever.

Henry was born in October 1846, one of the nine children of Robert Scott, a shoemaker to trade who had gathered to himself the posts of Inspector of the Poor for Portobello Parish, Burgh Treasurer and Treasurer and Secretary of the Parish Church, and Isabella Grigor. His father's brothers Alexander and Henry were prominent in the affairs of the town and his grandfather, also Henry, had been proprietor of the Baths.

Some years ago I was contacted by one of Henry Scott's grandsons, Mr Brice White, and was able to provide information and a brief history of Portobello for a family history he and his brother were compiling. In return, he sent me copies of extracts from a daily log that Henry had kept during his epic 108 day voyage of over 15,000 miles. Unfortunately the journal does not tell us why he decided to leave home, but early passages such as this suggest that Henry did harbour some hope of seeing his family again: "Said Goodbye to the loved ones, for how



"The last entry in Henry Scott's Log Book, which his parents never read."

long shall it be? It may be years; it may be for ever but may God grant in his mercy that we shall yet again sit round the family circle in the old home..."

Most of the emigrants were travelling on assisted passages and were overwhelmingly Irish with relatively few Scots. There was also a contingent of single women destined for jobs as domestic servants, married couples and a small number of passengers paying their own way. The Purser's main responsibility was to look after the food and water stores and distribute the daily and weekly rations to the passengers. This task brought about a state of war for the duration of the voyage between Purser and passengers who consistently claimed they were getting short measure, a charge which Henry cheerfully pleads guilty to in his journal. In his defence he could say that it was essential that the stores lasted out the voyage and that he had been instructed by the Captain to do all in his power to ensure this. That need became even more pressing when it was discovered well into the voyage that supplies signed for to come on board had not

done so and two water tanks, supposedly filled in Glasgow, were empty. However Henry seems to boast too much of how he "swindles" and does the passengers, especially the Irish, out of their "full whack", and it does not make pleasant reading. There are constant sarcastic, derogatory and contemptuous remarks about the Irish, and his grandson admitted that reading the journal one "could get the impression of an arrogant, young bigot".

The monotony of ship-board life was lightened by frequent fights among the male passengers. Mostly these consisted of two men coming to blows, followed by a general melee after which everyone went to bed "quite pleased with themselves". There were other more genteel entertainments; a number of concerts were organised where music, song and recitation were provided by the passengers and crew. There was also a Grand Dance that allowed the ladies to get out their best dresses. The Equator was crossed on 7th July with a visit by King Neptune and all the usual ceremonies. More sombre occasions were the four burials at

sea, including two of small children.

Nothing in Henry's life up to that time could have prepared him for the experiences of that voyage. There were the constant conflicts, seasickness, storms in which he was injured, and the ship was dirty and infested with lice. His relief on leaving the *Renfrewshire* on 17th September is obvious.

After arriving in Australia Henry lived for some years in Rockhampton, North Queensland, where he married in 1880 and later had a successful career as an accountant in Melbourne and Sydney. Brice White penned this picture of his grandfather in old age: "His interests were few; the Presbyterian Church, the Masonic Lodge and a bottle of whisky! He died a good old fellow, always proud of his Scottish origins and the village he came from, Portobello. A large old panoramic photograph of Edinburgh adorned the wall in his dining room throughout his life. With age it had become very dim as Grandpa had treasured and varnished it many times. The name in front of his house, yes, 'PORTOBELLO'".

Archie Foley

AULD LANG SIGN



THIS fine example of the sign writer's skill welcomed customers to the Pop Inn and amused passers by for many years but had almost reached the end of the road by the time this photograph was taken by Annie Rhodes. The venerable, convivial pub was demolished soon after and replaced by a betting shop.

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POTTERY WHEEL COMES FULL CIRCLE



Photo by Archie Foley

"I HAVE a historic electric wheel from the Portobello pottery. It belonged to a friend who worked there as a young man. He gave the wheel when the factory closed in 1972. If anyone fancies putting it back together and using it, it would be great."

When local potter, Alison Robinson, saw this message on the Scottish Potters Association website announcing that an original Buchan wheel was being offered, free to collect from Stow, she acted immediately: "I thought it would be great to have it working again or it could just be stored in my studio for a Portobello museum, especially while we have former Buchan employees still around to give advice on it. Well, I seized the chance to bring it back. It is some weight!" she said, with a lot of feeling.

Alison's ambition to have it working again in Portobello may take a little while to realise as the wheel is in bits and when it first arrived lacked one crucial part. Even although this has since been found and delivered it is not going to be easy to get the wheel going again, but Alison can call on expert help to fit the bits together and repair the electric motor. One of her pottery students at the Community Centre is a skilled craftsman and electrician who, along with a former pottery worker, has already given the dismembered wheel the once over. He hopes that they can get it back into working order, but it will take some time.

AF

PICTURE GALLERY ONLINE

OVER 1000 postcards and photos of Portobello, old views and new shots, can be seen on The Gallery on the community website www.porty.org.uk. There is also a wealth of local information which is particularly useful for newcomers to the area.

IDENTIFICATION REQUIRED

THIS photograph, printed on postcard paper, was taken by John Lees whose studio was at 24 Bath Street from 1920 to 1952. Judging from the dress of the man in the doorway it dates from near the end of that period. The cigarettes advertised in the display case on the right include Capstan, Players, Prize Crop and De Reszke and the prices shown at the bottom of the case are six-pence for 10 and a shilling for 20, which could help a tobacco historian to suggest a date.



Is this James Goldsbrough?

There are only two Goldsbroughs listed in the 1950 Edinburgh & Leith Post Office Directory. They are: - James Goldsbrough, 42 Joppa Road and W K Goldsbrough, 36 Promenade. Neither of these addresses is or was a shop. The first is the tenement entry next to the Ormelie Tavern. The second no longer exists as it was part of the demolished Marlborough Mansions block, but its listing in the directory shows that it too was a tenement entry. W K Goldsbrough was listed at 36 and 37a Promenade in earlier directories going back to the 1920s, so probably the shop in the photograph was at the latter address and he lived in a flat above it. It has been suggested that James was the son of W K Goldsbrough and could be the person in the photo, but it would be good to know whether or not this is correct.

Archie Foley

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PORTOBELLO HISTORY SOCIETY NEWS

THE first meeting of 2008 was held on 6th February, when our speaker was Dr. Stana Nenadic who gave a talk entitled *Lairds and Luxury. The Highland Gentry in Eighteenth Century Scotland: A Perspective on Scottish Society Through the Eyes of the Elite*. The talk was based on research undertaken for her book of the same title and exemplified the amount of fascinating information that can be discovered in estate papers. The changing role of family and estate life in the Highlands at this time was illustrated by the details given in the talk.

Our speaker on 5th March is Dr. Jenny Wormald, who will talk about *The Blessed Union: Why did the union of the crowns last?* As it is just over 400 years since the union, and with Scotland now having devolved government, this is an apt and topical subject.

Tony Goodman visits the society on 2nd April. He will talk about *Leith and its Environs c1300-c1600*. New information about our near neighbour is always welcome.

Wemyss Caves are the subject of a talk to be presented by Ann Watters on 7th May. These caves and their drawings are threatened by coastal erosion, so it is good to know that the vital evidence provided by the drawings is recorded and preserved for future generations.

Our AGM will be held on 4th June. It is hoped to have a display of some of the trophies belonging to Portobello Golf Club after the business.

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

Margaret Munro, Secretary

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WHAT'S ON

COFFEE MORNING: Sat. 8th March, 10am-12 noon in the Old Parish Church Hall, Bellfield St. Organised by Portobello Amnesty Group. Tickets £1, from local churches or pay at the door.

POD MEETING, Sat. 8th March, St James Church Hall, 1pm-4pm, to look at the organisation and its vision for the future - what events to hold etc. All welcome.

COFFEE MORNING for Christian Aid: Sat 5th April in St James Church Hall.

MUSIC AT ST MARKS: Sat. 19th April: Lawrence Dunn and Wendy Weatherby present another Afternoon of Music, including Gladstone's Bag playing signature tunes and theme music from the Golden Age of Wireless, Ronaldo Caruso jazz pianist, and The Spurtle Ceilidh Band from Portobello High School. See local advertising for more details.

MALECON MATINEE. Future dates: Sun 16th Mar, 3.30-6.30pm; Sat 19th Apr, 2.30-5.30; Sun 18th May, 3.30-6.30.

All welcome to traditional Cuban 'Son' and dance in Beach Lane Social Club, behind Portobello Police Station, £5 (incl free drinks). Start with the class before or our intro warm up and Cuban Ceilidh for all. All proceeds toward live Cuban bands etc. Email MaleconMatinee-subscribe@googlegroups.com to get on the MM email list, or contact Nick on 07803097727

A NICE CUP OF TEA!

P O R T O B E L L O REPORTER group member and contributor Lou Hardless, who is studying photography at Stevenson College, won a recent Tetley Tea national photography competition. The prize was a camera for the college and for herself, an assignment with University Caterers Magazine and a day with www.ephotozine.com as a guest of the editor. Her photo of green tea in a glass cup will be used in Tetley publicity.



Photos by Lou Hardless

PASSION PLAY IN DUDDINGSTON

THE streets of Duddingston village and the gardens of Duddingston Kirk will form an unusual theatre venue on Easter Sunday, 23rd March, for the passion play *To the Cross*.

With the help of a large supporting cast from a number of local Church and community groups, including children and youth groups, 10 actors from Theatre Alba will perform a re-enactment of the days leading up to Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. The play will be directed by Charles Nowosielski.

The audience will journey from the gardens of Duddingston Kirk, where they will witness 'The Last Supper', through the village and into Dr. Neil's Garden for the moving crucifixion scene.

The play was last performed at Duddingston in 2003, drawing a crowd of over 500. "We are confident that, this year, we will attract an even larger crowd, but for health and safety reasons we will unfortunately have to limit numbers to 900", said David Fleming, project co-ordinator. The performance will start at 2pm and last for about two hours. Entrance is free but donations are welcome.

The project is sponsored by Duddingston Kirk, with support from other local churches and grants from the Anchor Trust and Mercers' Company.

For further information see www.duddingstonkirk.co.uk or call David Fleming on 661 2598.



TALES OF LOCAL WILDLIFE

WE received a few reports of sightings of wildlife in the Portobello area in response to the request in our Winter issue. Marianne Russell e-mailed to say: "We've seen foxes in the Straiton Place/Regent St area. We were woken up last month by them 'barking' during the night. We've got a grey squirrel visiting the back green, and bats flying around our building but we don't know where their roost is. We bought a bat detector to listen to their sounds".

A Greater Spotted Woodpecker was reported in Moira Terrace in December, eating nuts put out for the tits, and another one in Coillesdene Avenue. A baby seal on the beach in December made off back to sea before a photo could be taken.

More unusual were a pheasant seen last autumn in Joppa Road and two herons that enjoyed the large goldfish they took from a garden pond in Joppa. They ate the bodies and left the heads and tails on the wall, to the fury of the owner, but stopped when he installed a statue of a heron at the pond.

Foxes are fairly common at all times of year; a large dog fox is often seen at night around Bedford Terrace and terrified the wits out of at least one cat, and there are reports of them capering about on the roofs of the cottages on Joppa Road. The number of squirrels is also on the increase; one was seen crossing the road towards St Philips Church - clearly not Tufty, as it wasn't on a 'zebra'!

B.M.

AMNESTY - LOCAL NEWS

LAST year, 2007, was one of the busiest in the last decade and saw the Group's membership rise to 10. Highlights of the year included an exhibition in Portobello Library of Amnesty's campaign for the UK ratification of the European Convention on Human Trafficking. Human Rights Day in December was again marked by a stall in Portobello High Street, when members of the public wrote 50 greetings cards with messages of support for prisoners of conscience and human rights defenders in Honduras, Egypt, Burma and Turkey; Towerbank, Holy Rood and Portobello High School pupils sent around 70 cards to prisoners and their supporters in Zimbabwe, Yemen, China and Azerbaijan.

Amnesty is using the 2008 Olympic Games as an opportunity to exert pressure on China regarding its appalling human rights record - 8000 executions a year, persecution of Tibetan and Uighar people who protest peacefully against injustices, suppression of the Falun Gong movement, and now the jailing of those who use the internet to raise human rights issues. There will be a display in the window of Portobello Library, with cards for the public to send to the Chinese authorities.

The Group meet in the vestry or hall of the URC Church in Marlborough St. at 7.30pm on the third Monday of each month. Visitors are welcome. For further information call 669 1308.

David Turner

COUNCILLORS' SURGERIES

Portobello & Craigmillar Ward

Cllr MICHAEL BRIDGMAN, SNP:

Portobello Library, 2nd Monday of the month, 6.30pm.

Bingham Community Centre, 1st Monday, 6.30pm.

St Francis Primary School, 3rd Monday (term-time) 6.30pm.

OR call 529 4233 or email michael.bridgman@edinburgh.gov.uk

Cllr MAUREEN CHILD, Labour:

Portobello Library, most Mondays, at 7pm.

To check availability or make a different appointment, call 529 3268 or email maureen.child@edinburgh.gov.uk

Cllr STEPHEN HAWKINS, Liberal Democrat:

Portobello Library, each Wednesday, from 6pm.

OR Tel. 529 3262 or email stephen.hawkins@edinburgh.gov.uk

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Ewan can be contacted on (0131) 529 3261 or at ewan.aitken@edinburgh.gov.uk

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BURNS CELEBRATION

ON 30th January the P7 pupils at Towerbank held a Burns Supper. They organized most of it and made all of the invitations and chose who to invite. Among them was Stuart Weaver, the well known minister of St Phillips Church, Miss Pringle and her friend Chris White. Mrs Gilmour and Mrs Rosie were there too, along with Mrs Morrison and Miss Duncan, the P7 teachers.

The supper started with Connor Scott, a student from Portobello High School, piping in the haggis with Ciaran, holding the haggis. Bradley Hogg then recited 'Address tae a Haggis'. Everyone then started to tuck in to the haggis, neeps and tatties, and for pudding they had trifle, shortbread, and cheese and oatcakes.

The food was followed by masses of entertainment, some of which were Vance Longwill singing and playing on his guitar, P7a acting out a couple of Macbeth scenes, a dance from P7b, Brooke Arthur and Emma Kivlin dancing a sword dance, Miss Pringle and Chris White singing, The toast tae the lassies and the reply tae the laddies and many more!

The event was rounded off by Mrs Gilmour making a speech. Overall she was very pleased with it and thought the entertainment was wonderful!

Sophie Davidson P7a

(Everyone at Towerbank Primary enjoyed the Scottish focus month when they learned so much about our fascinating Scottish history and enjoyed dancing and singing at our Ceilidhs. A huge "Thanks" to everyone who helped make it a great success. Weel done!!!! P.M)

ON THE SANTA RUN



ON 16th December, 51 pupils and seven staff from Portobello High School took part in the 2007 Santa Run, braving the cold in full Santa suits and beards to run a 1 mile lap of Princes Street Gardens. They raised £703 for 'When You Wish Upon a Star', a charity that grants 'wishes' for children with life-threatening diseases. At the end of their run the group were grateful for the orange juice and milk donated by Wiseman's Dairies.

COW SAYS: "BREAKFAST IS GOOD FOR YOU"



THE benefits of drinking milk and eating a healthy breakfast were on the menu at The Royal High Primary School on 18th January, during Farmhouse Breakfast Week, which is part of the government's school health programme. This annual event is supported by the Milk Development Council through its School Milk Project, and is managed by the Home Grown Cereals Authority.

Nutritionists say breakfast is an essential start to the day, as it boosts concentration and mental performance and reduces stress levels, especially in children. It also helps with weight control by reducing cravings for snacks.

Charlotte the Cow, the School Milk Project's mascot, was present to assist at the event.

'SMART ATTACK OF ART'

PORTOBELLO Town Hall was filled with budding Picasos and Van Goghs during the schools' mid-term break when the 'Smart Attack of Art' show came to town.

Artist and television presenter Mike Amatt entertained local children with a mixture of jokes, art and music and many of the young audience were invited onto the stage to learn some cartoonists' secrets. But the highlight of the afternoon was Mike's drawing of Sponge Bob Square Pants accompanied by the theme tune of the popular cartoon show which the children sang along to at the top of their voices.

Parent, Karen Coombe, said: "It was great to be able to see something locally with the children".



Photo by Karen Coombe

CHILDREN'S HOLIDAY CLUB

THIS year's Covenanted Churches Easter Holiday Club for children in P1-P7 takes place on Monday 31st March at the Old Parish Church Hall, Bellfield St, from 10am-12 noon. Easter 2008 'Roundabout', is based on the theme of all things round connected with the Easter story, with stories, songs, games and crafts. Secondary school pupils are invited to join in as Youth Helpers. For more information, contact Nell on 669 4351.

FRUITASTIC vs. VEGILICIOUS

THIS healthy eating event for children, organised by 2nd year Event Management students at Queen Margaret University, was held at Portobello Town Hall on 22nd February. Money was raised for the Barnardos children's charity from ticket sales and a 'find the treasure' map while the children learned about healthy eating.

They enjoyed fun activities such as sowing cress seeds donated by Dobbies Garden Centre, tasting fresh produce donated by Wilsons Fresh Farm Produce, potato printing, fruit and vegetable hoopla and much more.

Posters giving clues for a 'Fruitastic vs. Vegilicious' quiz were provided by Towerbank, The Royal High, Parsons Green and St Johns primary schools. A fantastic afternoon was enjoyed by all, and the students and Barnardos would like to thank everyone involved for their contributions.

Catriona Hogg

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www.gardenbanter.co.uk is a thriving no-frills site that has as its aim "to bring the UK gardening community together" and succeeds in doing just that by acting as a mirror for the best gardening newsgroups. With 50,000 threads the answer to your question must be there. New users should read the FAQs and About Garden Banter first. Registration is free and recommended to get the best from all that the site provides.

LOCAL MAN TO RUN LONDON MARATHON

ONE of our advertisers, painter and decorator Malcolm Parry, has secured a gold entry to run the London Marathon on 13th April for Leukaemia Care. He says: "I have always wanted to do something challenging for a good cause, and I've been training five times a week since early in December".

Malcolm needs to raise at least £1500 and organised a fund-raising night in Portobello on 29th February, with live entertainment, raffle and auction, to be followed by a Pub Quiz (with a children's section) on Sunday 16th March at 4pm at the Volunteer Arms in Musselburgh. Malcolm would also appreciate any local sponsorship, which can be pledged at www.justgiving.com/malcolmparry

TO keep the workload to a minimum at this, the busiest time on the gardener's calendar, I do some unconventional things. On every journey into the garden I pull out a few weeds, roll them into a ball and tuck under any plant big enough to hide it: for example, sticky willies wrapped around other smaller weeds make a tennis ball-sized 'weedball'. If I do a major weeding I pull out every little one, then mulch with shreds of shrubs pruned through the winter or with homemade compost. This suppresses weeds, feeds the soil, and both opens up clay soil and binds it together if sandy. Some common weeds have other uses: nettle tops in the spring make a great vitamin-rich soup, or use nettle juice to feed tomatoes instead of comfrey. If you find slugs or snails always eat your lettuces, try the red-tinted ones which they never seem to touch.

The main job in spring is to plant seeds, indoors or in the open ground, after first checking dates and temperatures for sowing. I wait until the end of April to sow hardy annuals outdoors, when there's less chance of them rotting away in the wet. If sowing indoors, gather together seed compost, pots, seeds, labels and a hand sprayer for watering; this has less chance of washing away the fine seeds than the rose on a watering can. Don't sow too many unless you're prepared to prick out the extras to give away. I've done this nearly every year and I'm determined this year not to be greedy; 100 tomato plants aren't necessary if your greenhouse can only take six. So if you're new to greenhouse gardening, be aware of what you'll use and allow just a few extra for spares.

Make sure everything grown inside is allowed to harden off, which means some form of protection is needed, such as a cold frame. Start by opening the frame just during the day, then over a few weeks, leave the plants out with the frame all night, then they won't suffer a shock if it turns cooler for a few nights.

Even if you have only a window box, pot or container it's worth buying a packet of night-scented stock and sprinkling a pinch of seed over the top once a fortnight, to get that great scent wafting about in the evening. I use the Organic Garden Catalogue for the few things I need: organically produced seed, sterilised (peat free) seed compost and seaweed extract. Their number is 0845 130 1304 or order online on www.OrganicCatalogue.com



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GARDEN GALLERY PLANNED

OVER 50 people with homes on the Prom and adjacent streets have offered their front gardens as sites for an exhibition of contemporary artworks in August. The exhibition is a project of local public arts trust, Big Things on the Beach. It will be professionally managed and we are hoping that a wide range of artists, from newcomers to well-known names, will want

to show their work in Portobello. A number of funding applications have been made to cover the costs of employing a curator and transporting, installing and removing artworks and we will have the results in March. We intend that the Garden Gallery will have a high profile as part of the Edinburgh Art Festival and the other August festivals in Edinburgh. If you

would like to be a Garden Gallery host and you have a front garden - anything from a window-box to a sweeping lawn - anywhere in the area bounded by the Promenade, Kings Road and the High Street/Joppa Road, contact enquiries@bigthingsonthebeach.org.uk with your name, address and telephone number or drop the information in at the Community Centre marked 'Portobello Garden Gallery'. Further information about Big Things on the Beach, and about this and other projects, can be found by going to the website www.bigthingsonthebeach.org.uk.

Damian Killeen

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