

# The Portobello REPORTER

Quarterly: Summer 2008  
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Also available online on [www.porty.org.uk](http://www.porty.org.uk)

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**The independent voice of Portobello**

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## POTTERY KILNS UPDATE

THE shrouding round the kilns has at long last been removed and reconfiguration of the scaffolding has allowed the Phase Two consolidation works to begin. The Council concedes that there has been a delay, but this was due in part to having to wait for Scheduled Monument Consent and lengthy spells of bad weather.

Lime mortar capping of the wallhead of the damaged kiln has been completed. Pointing work was required on both kilns and this has been carried out on the vertical sections of both. The steel bands round the kilns are essential to their integrity and all the existing bands were examined by a blacksmith. Replacement bands are being fitted where necessary and all bands and the metal doors will be painted black. When all this is finished the scaffolding will be dismantled, which will allow the vegetation on the 1906 kiln to be removed using a "Simon" hoist. The Information Board, which has been in safe storage, will be re-sited as close to its original location as practicable.

These works will repair the



Photo by Archie Foley

standing kiln to prevent any concerns regarding future safety implications, and any further deterioration to the damaged kiln to provide a solid base on which to rebuild, allowing the existing protection scaffolding to be removed.

Simpson & Brown Architects have completed their appraisal and their report, detailing various repair options with indicative costs, has been submitted to the Council's management for consideration and action.

The kilns stand in an area

where residential redevelopment is likely to take place and there is some concern about how they could be affected. When asked, a council spokesman said: "Irrespective of what happens with the adjoining site or with the Master Plan, and these have their own legal processes to go through, these works will be carried out, but there is a desire to maximise the kilns and the site and, as such, discussions are ongoing to investigate the various possibilities open."

Archie Foley

## COMMUNITY COUNCIL VACANCIES PORTOBELLO

Community Council is one of the most active in Edinburgh. It has 15 elected members and 15 group representatives, who meet on the last Monday of the month (except July and December) in Portobello Baptist Church Hall in the High Street at 7.30 pm. Meetings are open and visitors are encouraged to participate in discussions.

For the last couple of years we have been reacting to several planning issues. Now we would like to move forward with some positive actions of our own and develop new initiatives for Portobello.

Later in the summer we hope to call for nominations for at least four new elected members, and if you have the energy to join in and help us and would like to find out more, please ring the Secretary (Nick Stroud, 669 6823), the Chair (Robert Gatliff, 669 5059), visit [www.porty.org.uk](http://www.porty.org.uk) or come to our meeting on 30th June to see us in action.

Robert Gatliff

## ART GALLERY IN LOCAL GARDENS

FROM 2nd to 30th of August, Portobello will play host to a unique exhibition when local and internationally recognised artists will display their work in local front gardens.

The Garden Gallery will include painting, sculpture, installations, and sound and performance work, in which the artists will explore the relationships in the environment on and around Edinburgh's city beach. The exhibition will feature in the Edinburgh Art Festival 2008.

Art-work will also appear in other local venues, with one-off events taking place in public and private spaces. Tours and children's events will also be held during the exhibition. For up-to-date event information see [www.bigthingsonthebeach.org.uk](http://www.bigthingsonthebeach.org.uk)

The Garden Gallery is an initiative of the community-based arts trust, Big Things on the Beach and is curated by Amber Roome Contemporary Art. The exhibition is supported by The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and Awards for All.

## COUNCIL CUTS HIT COMMUNITY NEWSPAPERS

THE Edinburgh Community Newspaper Trust suffered an 85% reduction in Council grants in April and as a consequence *The Gorgie Dalry Gazette* and *The West Edinburgh Times* have been forced to close. Other papers in the group including *The*

*North Edinburgh News* are considering raising revenue from advertising to remain in print which would put them in a similar position to *The Portobello Reporter* which is supported solely by the advertising of local trades.

## NW PORTOBELLO MASTER PLAN - LOCAL VOICES HEARD

A REPORT on the finalised Development Brief (Master Plan) for North West Portobello was approved by the City of Edinburgh Council's planning committee on 15th May. Following the exhibition of a revised Plan in the library early in the year, the Planning Department took account of many of the points made in the 201 letters received from the community and recommended in the report that the following elements of the Plan should be dropped:

- the inclusion of a metro-type supermarket on the High Street.
- the higher flatted blocks along Harry Lauder road edge.
- the loss of the Bridge Street public car park.
- the loss of the Figgate Burn, between the High Street and Promenade, to public access, behind private back gardens
- student accommodation as the gateway building
- a landmark building on the High Street at the east corner of Kings Road
- development rising to 5 storeys on the Promenade
- sedum-roofed buildings at the landscaped edge
- development of the 5-a-side football pitches unless another local site is provided
- move of the library and community centre from their present sites, unless further studies show this to be a desirable option

Other concerns expressed by a number of delegations to the committee were "noted" and will be taken into consideration when specific planning applications are received. These include the heights of buildings, the orientation of buildings on the Scottish Power site likely to block views of Arthur's Seat, and the setting of the kilns. So local voices have been heard and Portobello has shown once again that it is an active and concerned community.

The Brief will provide supplementary planning guidance for proposed developments over the next 15-20 years.

BM

## WORK STARTS ON KINGS ROAD ROUNDABOUT

WORK to replace the Kings Road roundabout with traffic lights will start on Monday 16th June and is expected to take about 20 weeks. It will be carried out between 7am-10pm, Monday to Friday, and 8am-7pm on Saturdays.

A priority mechanism will be installed at the new junction for buses that are behind schedule and peak period-only bus lanes are also planned. Pedestrian crossings and cycle lanes will be installed at all five approaches. Another detection mechanism will

improve the flow of traffic and reduce delays by adjusting the signals to suit variations in traffic volumes throughout the day.

Traffic management will be put in place to minimise the impact of the work, and parking regulations will be strongly enforced, but there will almost certainly be disruption, long delays and tailbacks. Updated reports on progress will be available on the Council website under Transport and on local radio.

# PORTY PROFILE No. 31 ALISON ROBINSON

**ACCORDING** to Alison: "It's not only cats; some women too have nine lives and I'm one of them". This is how she describes a life of many careers.



Photo by Margaret Munro

Although she wanted to be apprenticed to a potter, her parents insisted she had qualifications, so she spent three years at Bath Academy of Art. She then taught in London and, after visiting Edinburgh, decided to move here and worked in Buchan's Pottery in the summer of 1961.

Alison then taught pottery after school at Edinburgh Academy, while at the same time making and selling mugs. After she married and had two children the family moved to East Lothian for the benefits of country life. She set up Poldrate Pottery in Haddington, designing and producing cookie jars in the shape of the houses on Haddington High Street, and jugs and ornaments based on a Celtic drawing of a goose. These were very popular and, during the seven years of production, Alison says, "many geese migrated to such places as Norway, Iceland, Japan and Canada".

When Alison's husband took early retirement, they moved to a small village in France, where she worked as roofer, gardener and cook at the local restaurant. When it was sold in 1995, she returned to Scotland and came to live in Portobello. "When I walked up my street", she says, "it felt just right; a nice quiet place where I could be at home." At first she provided outside catering, including catering for film crews on films such as *Trainspotting* and *The Crow Road*. She gave this up in 2003, however, to help a friend with a commission to recreate the 13th Century clay-paste lustre tiles from Veramin, Persia for a new palace in Jordan.

Alison was recently involved in the renovation of the Coade Stone pillars, now in the Community Garden on the Promenade. She made a version of the stone to replace some of the missing sections and has just finished a top for the largest pillar. She says: "When that is complete I will be free for my next adventure".

MM

# 'GREEN SPACE' AGE FORERUNNERS



Photo by Karen Coombe

**SOME** people in the Portobello community are way ahead of the game when it comes to grasping the nettle and tackling the effects of climate change. Three years ago a group of locals formed Portobello Energy Descent and Land Reform Group and put Portobello forward as the first Transition Town in Scotland. Transition is an idea devised by educator Rob Hopkins and aims to confront environmental issues from the level of the community. PEDAL member Eva Schonveld says, "It's about deciding on the things that are really important to us and planning how we can take action to reduce our carbon footprint."

Recent projects include "kicking plastic bags out of town" and introducing the popular Porty Shoppers and, to raise awareness about the value of green spaces, a Green Space Seminar was held in the town hall. Also crucial to the concept of energy descent is local food sourcing and the Food Group is currently considering how people can make use of and share their own home grown harvests. Eva says: "The group's work is about sharing information and inspiring people. Hopefully they will see that what we are doing could be really good news for Portobello."

Future projects are more substantial and Eva is positive the lengthy planning process will come to fruition soon. "We're putting in for a grant for a feasibility study for an urban community buy-out of a social venue for community use. We also have the support of the Council to start up a community orchard in the autumn on a small triangle of disused Council land by Brunstane Burn. The harvest from the trees will be for the benefit of the community, providing a small percentage of truly locally grown zero-carbon food."

The Transition Town network idea is catching on in Scotland and Biggar and Dunbar have also signed up. Eva says she is aware that sceptics may be doubtful that a small town can make a difference to such a global problem and says: "Sometimes somebody has to be the first and I think we can be really proud of ourselves for taking that first step."

If you would like to find out more contact Eva on 657 2555.

Karen Coombe

# NEWS IN BRIEF

**THE PORTY SHOPPER:** A new stock of these popular bags is now available from Just World Shop, Findlays Butcher/Deli, Portobello Stationers, Banana Republic, Mica Woodwares, Williamson's fish-mongers, Wisteria Lane, Artisan Gifts, CostCutter, The Fine Wine Company and Robertson's wool shop, as well as the Library and Community Centre.

**BUSTRACKER,** the real-time bus information system that tells passengers when the next bus will arrive, is coming to Portobello High Street and beyond on the 26/15 and X26 route. It is already working in the centre of Edinburgh.


**WITNESS URGENTLY SOUGHT:** On the 14th April 2008 there was an accident involving a lorry that crashed into a car (Honda) parked opposite Scotmid on Bath Street, around 10.30pm. If you were the witness to this accident could you please call 07941090184.

**NEED HELP WITH YOUR GARDEN?** The Council provides a basic garden service to people who are unable to tend their own through frailty or disability and have no other source of help. For more information call 529 3030 or email [garden.aid@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:garden.aid@edinburgh.gov.uk)

**FRIENDS OF FIGGATE PARK:** This is a recently-constituted group of local people who aim to encourage environmental improvement and practical conservation in the park. Membership is open to all, and donations would be welcome. For more information see the website [www.figgatepark.org.uk](http://www.figgatepark.org.uk) which also has over 70 photos of the park and its birdlife, as well as some less appealing ones showing the harvest of rubbish from recent clean-ups

**HIGH SCHOOL FLOODED:** Portobello High School was shut for four days in May after a sink on the 6th floor was deliberately blocked and the tap left running. There was extensive water damage to the fabric of the building on the floors below, and to equipment, books and other teaching material. The Parent Council paid tribute to the "superb response" of the Head Teacher and staff, which ensured that there was minimal impact on students sitting exams, and added: "The vulnerability of the ageing structure of the school to this kind of incident is only too evident".

**MEADOWBANK STADIUM:** A proposal to rebuild the stadium on-site, with part-funding from the sale of some of the present site for housing, was agreed at a Council meeting in March.



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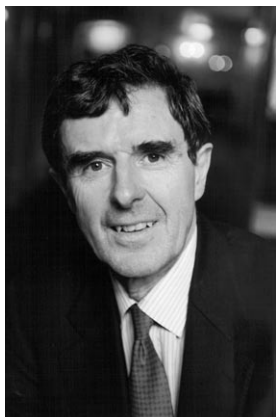
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If you have a problem or issue you would like to raise with your local MP please contact Gavin at

Constituency Office, 54 Portobello High Street, Edinburgh, EH15 1DA

Tel: 0131 669 6002  
Email: [gillana@parliament.uk](mailto:gillana@parliament.uk)  
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# ON THE BEAT

NOW is the time of year when we enjoy our gardens or go on holiday. It's also the time when thefts from garden sheds, "slip in" thefts from homes, and holiday "break ins" are more prevalent, but there is a lot you can do to prevent them.

Use a good quality closed-shackle padlock on your shed door, and attach the hasp and door hinges with coach bolts rather than screws, to prevent easy removal. Lace a chain through the handles of garden forks, spades, bicycles etc. This stops a thief from removing single items. Remember, tools from your shed can be used to force entry to your house. Fit a shed alarm and an internal wire mesh grille to the window, and install security lighting for your garden.

"Slip in" thefts often occur when you are busy in the house or garden: the thief slips into your house through an insecure door or window and steals your valuables. So lock and secure your front door, not just on the Yale lock which is easy to slip open. Secure the front windows and any conservatory or patio doors.

When you go away, ask the Post Office to suspend your mail so it's not lying behind the door or sticking out the letterbox, and stop the newspapers. Ask someone you trust to keep an eye on your house. Fit timer switches, but not just in the hallway - who sits in their hallway? Secure all windows and doors and put all keys out of sight. If you have a house alarm, use it.

If you see a crime being committed, please call 999 if urgent police assistance is required, or 311 3131 to report it. Remember, if you have any information regarding a crime or criminal activity, you can give this anonymously by phoning Crimestoppers on 0800 555111.

PC Kevin Lawson,  
East Edinburgh Crime Prevention Officer

## PORTY AUTHORS INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS

PORTY authors, the Mulgray Twins, Helen and Morna are celebrating international success with their first novel *No Suspicious Circumstances* published in 2007, which has been a sell-out. Since last year's report in this newspaper, *No Suspicious Circumstances* has been Book of the Month in all Waterstone's Scottish branches, and is already in paperback, large print, and BBC Audio library edition.

Now Japanese and German readers will have the pleasure of enjoying the adventures of DJ

Smith, undercover agent for Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, and Gorgonzola her drug-detecting Persian cat, a cat with attitude.

DJ and Gorgonzola have just made a second appearance in the twins' second book in the series, *Under Suspicion* published by Allison & Busby, available in hardback at £19.99.

Helen and Morna will be appearing in the Edinburgh Book Festival in August with Alanna Knight, author of the Inspector Faro Victorian crime series.

## ROYAL BRITISH LEGION PORTOBELLO

CONTRARY to rumour, the Portobello Branch of the RBL continues to provide social and sporting activities for over 1000 members, including golf, angling, bowls, darts, snooker, dominoes and cribbage, and special sections for women and over-60s. The club celebrated its 40th year in its Baileyfield Road premises at the Annual Dinner Dance in May, at which Gavin Strang MP was a guest.

The Branch also makes donations to local charities, and Chairman David Thomson was recently delighted to be able to give a cheque for £2,150 to Ward One of Edinburgh Cancer Care, to which some members and their families have recently been indebted.

Enquiries regarding memberships can be made to the Secretary, RBL Portobello Branch, Clifton House, Baileyfield Road, Edinburgh 15. Walter Heriot

**The Portobello Reporter is produced by volunteers, with contributions in this issue from 38 local people. If you have something to publicise or would like to advertise call 669 3466 or email us at portyreporter@btinternet.com Sept deadline 7th Aug 08**

THE European Basketball Championships take place in Edinburgh in June. To celebrate this, and the link with Portobello's schools, which are strong in the sport, the Scotland National Basketball Team, including our own ex-PHS pupil, Garreth Lodge, will visit the library on Thursday 12th June to launch this summer's 'Team Read', our summer books promotion for children. They will be bringing basketballs and equipment with them for a Press Call too, so it will be an active morning! Come and see them in action at 1.30pm.

TEAM READ will feature lots of events, competitions and a party in the summer holidays, as well as encouraging children to join in to get their stickers and gifts, with a free prize draw at the end of the summer. Come to the library as soon as school stops, to join!

Three new services have started in the library and, as there is a lot going on nowadays, we have started a 'What's On' page in the foyer, to show days and times each week.

STORYTIME, for young children aged 4-7, is on Thursdays in June from 3.00-3.30. Just come to the children's area to listen in.

LOVE AND CUDDLES a signing (hand gestures) class for parents with babies, is starting on Thursdays at 10.30 and 11.30am in the Community Room. The class is run by Clare Gately and costs £4 per session, with coffee for parents. There is also a website [www.loveandcuddles.co.uk](http://www.loveandcuddles.co.uk) on signing with babies.

RHYMETIMES for parents, carers and babies is very busy on Wednesday mornings and the singing gets better and better! Due to its popularity, weekend sessions are now held monthly, on alternating Saturdays and Sundays during term times. Come in and pick up a flier with dates.

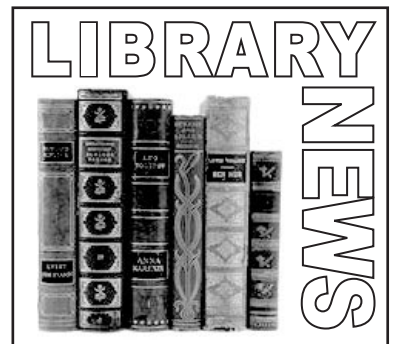
NEXT STEP, help and advice for computer users, is on Saturdays from 11.30am-12.30 in the Community Room. If you have started to use a computer but would like to know how to do certain things better or solve problems, this could help you. Please book at the counter.

Our free COMPUTERS FOR BEGINNERS classes are running from 11am-12 on Friday mornings, for 4 weeks. Please pre-book at the counter and join our wee 5-6 person classes, to learn how to use the mouse and keyboard, and explore the internet.

Capital Collections, a selection of beautiful images of Old Edinburgh, is now available on the internet, and as a travelling display which will be coming to the library in time for the summer holidays. We hope to have some of the images for sale as posters.

Our meeting rooms have been recently refurbished. If your group would like a place to meet there are a few slots available and the charges are very reasonable. For details call 529 5560.

Joyce Campbell



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# MOUNT LODGE MEMORIES

THERE must be few people left in Portobello who remember Mount Lodge. My grandfather William Torrance lived there and I remember the old house remarkably well in the years before it was abandoned in 1929 and demolished shortly afterwards. The railway company who had owned the land since the mid-19th century sold it to Edinburgh Council for a small housing development. William Torrance had rented the house and the land it sat on from 1905. He brought up his three daughters there, his wife died there just before the 1914 war. The house held many memories for the family.

The drive led up from Windsor Place, on the left hand side just beyond the pillared house which used to be the centre for driving tests. Mount Lodge's wide iron gates were very much a feature of Windsor Place. The drive was quite long with tall trees on the left and a fence to keep the ponies in on the right. The perimeter of the grounds stretched forward to Hope Lane, where there was a useful gate at the top of quite a steep bank. This gave the family a convenient short cut to the Tin Church, the predecessor of St. James's in Rosefield Place and a quick route later to the Central Picture House. On the left of the drive the land went down to the High Street and the old "Pike a Plea". During World War One this section was leased to Mr. Proctor as a market garden. He continued growing veg-



Photo courtesy of the Kelly Family

Garden front with a distinctive Indian-style verandah

etables there in the twenties. A rather ramshackle cottage stood by the west wall nearer to the Christian Path. The Jessamines lived there with their eight children. Mr. Jessamine did maintenance work for the Torrances and his wife did the washing. I played with the children. The fields and the ponies made it a paradise to me.



Torrance family - Silver Wedding Anniversary 1914

The house stood square and unassuming at right angles to the drive with steps leading up to the front door. To the West of the building, where all the windows were above ground, there was a big lawn, where at one time washing was hung. To the back a conservatory had been added in Victorian times. The East side

also had all its windows exposed, but the front had its basement under the entrance steps. Mount Lodge was a bungalow, as known in Bengal and to the design of the original owner Colonel Scott, an old India hand. Later it became the home of Colonel Johnston, four times Provost of Portobello, who had fought in the Peninsular Wars.

The field with the ponies stretched to the wall of the Christian Path, at the West side of which was a gate handy for the girls to run out of on their way to the station and school in Queen Street. Their father used it as well for the railway connection to Fushie-bridge and his flour mill at Catcune. There was a scattering of old trees and grass, including a tennis court carefully marked out in white. Over to the West side were hen houses and an old pig sty which had been brought back into use during the shortages of the first war.

Inside the house was quite splendid, with a

Georgian arched vestibule opening onto a lovely oval hall, full of light from the big flattish dome of the cupola in the ceiling. The drawing-room behind this stretched the full width of the house. Off that came the verandah above the conservatory. It was quite narrow with iron railings. We often sat there on the South side in the summer. On the same floor was a dining room, a parlour and at least three bedrooms. The bathroom was a museum piece of mahogany, white porcelain and cranking shower-bath arrangements. The stair to the basement was wide and easy to climb. Below was a big kitchen, a large hall and two bedrooms. A dark passage under the front steps led to Mr. Proctor's garden. I was told there was an ice house somewhere in that area.

The family always loved Mount Lodge and spoke of it endlessly. Now there is only me to remember it.

Dorothy Kelly  
(formerly Cavaye)

(More information on Mount Lodge and the Torrances can be found at [www.kosmoid.net/portobello](http://www.kosmoid.net/portobello))

## JAMES GOLDSBROUGH

WE had an excellent response to the request for help to identify the man photographed standing in the doorway of the tobacconist's shop in the Marlborough Mansions block on the Promenade. While we are still unable to put a name to him, we do know that it's not James Goldsbrough, as suggested.

A nephew of Mr Goldsbrough told us that his uncle, who died in 1996, had lived at 42 Joppa Road but owned Pincock's the ironmonger's shop in Portobello High Street and had no connection, as far as he knew, with the Goldsbroughs on the Promenade. Former friends and neighbours added the information that the family had originally come to Portobello from England to work in the bottle works and that James Goldsbrough was one of a family of about 12 children.

One caller told us that cigarette prices were raised to those shown in the window display, sixpence for 10 and a shilling for 20, by the Budget of 1938, so perhaps the photograph dates from that period.

Archie Foley



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# PORTOBELLO'S SIGNAL SUCCESS

WAS Portobello the site of the world's first railway signal box? This possibility is suggested by Cuthbert Hamilton Ellis in his history of the North British Railway in which he describes how: "A quaint thing happened in 1847 when a youth named Robert Skelden [was serving as] pointsman at Hawick Junction (later Portobello East Junction)... with two fixed signals to look after..." [Under the system operating at the time he would have had to go out to each signal several times during his shift to change it as and when necessary. This of course had to be done in all kinds of weather, which Skelden obviously found irksome.] "He found that by rigging some cable with a counterweight improvised from a broken rail-chair he could work both while sitting out of the rain in his box between them." Although Skelden was reported to

his superiors the Board of Directors, when they heard of it, thought it a good idea, and the Royal Scottish Society of Arts awarded him a silver medal for his ingenuity.

Not much more than this is known about Robert Skelden. There is only one person of that name recorded in the 1851 census in the whole of Scotland and he lived in Rosebank Square, Portobello. He was an Inspector of Lamps on the railway so could well be the individual mentioned in the book. He was aged 30 in the census, however, so was hardly a youth in 1847 as Hamilton Ellis states. Skelden, his wife and two children disappear from the Scottish statutory records after 1851 and it could be that he went to work in England with the railway company.

(Thanks to Roger Kelly, who alerted me to this piece of Portobello history.)

Archie Foley

# MARGARET SACKVILLE

LADY Margaret Sackville was the daughter of the 7th Earl de la Warr, and lived from about 1910 to 1929 with her mother, the Dowager Countess de la Warr, in Duddingston Cottage, Milton Road West, which was rented from the Duke of Abercorn. Photographs show that it was a substantial three-storey building rather than a cottage in the accepted sense of the word, and after it was demolished in 1957 the site was occupied by Southfield Square.



Lady Margaret Sackville seated next to Sir Harry Lauder.

Photo courtesy of Portobello Burns Club

Although all but forgotten now, during her lifetime Margaret Sackville was a highly regarded literary figure and poet. She published 21 volumes that included children's fairy stories as well as poetry and was active in the literary salons of London and Edinburgh. Her mother's Duddingston home attracted prominent literary and political visitors, and among the latter may well have been Ramsey Macdonald, the leader of the Labour Party and first Labour Prime Minister. They were linked by a shared pacifism and both endured great hostility for their opposition to the First World War, but the discovery in late 2006 of hundreds of love letters written by Macdonald to Margaret Sackville revealed that the two had, in fact, been lovers over many years. The first letter dates from 1913 and the last was written in 1929. It seems that he proposed marriage and was turned down three times, so perhaps the barriers of class and religion were too much. He was the illegitimate son of a farm worker and Presbyterian and she was a glamorous aristocrat and Roman Catholic.

Margaret Sackville gave a number of talks to organisations in Portobello and in January 1931 was a guest speaker along with Sir Harry Lauder at the Portobello Burns Club. Her mother died in 1929 and the next tenant of Duddingston Cottage was Mr Riley Jones the owner of the Portobello Laundry. Margaret Sackville settled in Cheltenham from 1936 and died there in 1963. She was considered to be a society beauty in her younger years and is depicted in profile in the Muses that surround the statue of Gladstone in Atholl Crescent, Edinburgh.

Archie Foley

## PORTOBELLO HISTORY SOCIETY NEWS

OUR 2007/2008 season closed on 4th June, ending a year of thought-provoking talks covering a wide range of historical topics.

Our speaker in March was Dr. Jenny Wormald who explored 'The Blessed Union': Why did the union of the crowns last?' Dr. Wormald discussed a variety of reasons, and whether or not the union of 1707 was an inevitable result.

In April, Tony Goodman presented *Leith and its Environs c1300-c1600*. He painted a vivid picture of Leith, highlighting its independence from Edinburgh and its status as a port. Many members' interest was caught with his discussion of the cult of St. Anthony.

An illustrated talk on Wemyss Caves was presented by Ann Watters at our May meeting. The vulnerability of the caves to coastal erosion and the devastating effects of storms were clear from her photographs. The carved illustrations in many of the caves, some believed to be Pictish, provide ample reason to visit them.

At the time of going to press, our AGM was due to be held on Wednesday, 4th June, followed by an illustrated talk by Mrs Dorothy Kelly, nee Cavaye, on 'Mount Lodge and the Torrance Family'. Chester Kruk, a society member, was to bring along trophies and medals belonging to Portobello Golf Club. Chester is writing a book on the club and was looking forward to hearing stories about it from society members.

Our 2008/2009 programme of talks begins on Wednesday, 3rd September. Our annual subscription is only £5 and members old and new are welcome to our meetings in St. John's Church Hall in Brighton Place. All meetings begin at 7pm.

Margaret Munro, Secretary

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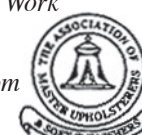
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## WHAT'S ON

**PORTOBELLO AMENITY SOCIETY AGM**, Wed. 11th June, 7.30pm, St Mark's Church Portobello High St. Elizabeth Graham, planning officer for the Cockburn Association, will be the guest speaker.

**MUSIC ON A SUMMER EVENING**, Tuesday 17th June at 7.30pm, Old Parish Church, Bellfield St. See posters for details.

**NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTNERSHIP**: Next meeting Wed. 25th June at 7pm, Portobello High School.

**PORTOBELLO COMMUNITY COUNCIL**: Next meetings - Mon. 30th June/ 25th Aug. at 7.30pm, Baptist Church Hall, Portobello High St. Minutes available in the Library or on [www.porty.org.uk](http://www.porty.org.uk)

**MALECON MATINEE**: Sat. 16th Aug, 2.30-5.50pm. Traditional Cuban Ceilidh for all in the Beach Lane Social Club with help for beginners. £5 includes free drink. Accompanied under-14s free. For information join the email list on [RuedaClub-subscribe@googlegroups.com](mailto:RuedaClub-subscribe@googlegroups.com) (No MM in June or July).

## ST MARK'S MUSIC

**ANOTHER** Afternoon of Music at St Mark's was presented on 19th April by Lawrence Dunn and Wendy Weatherby. The enjoyable and varied programme included violin concertos performed by Louise Mackay, Hannah Glen, Andrew Barrie and Callum McLeod, jazz pianist Ronaldo Caruso, songs by Wendy Weatherby and Roger Lang, and themes from the Golden Age of Wireless, played by Gladstone's Bag and the Belhaven Ensemble.

## THE BIRDS OF FIGGATE PARK

IN my childhood in the 1940s and 50s, before land reclamation in Seafield Bay and the building of the city sewage works, huge amounts of spent distillers/brewers grains washed up on the beach at Seafield. This was food for great flocks of birds, notably greenfinches, and the bay itself was a haven for tens of thousands of wintering sea ducks that fed on its prolific sewage-induced marine life.



Photo by Tom Forsyth

The greenfinch nesting colonies spread to the ivied walls of the Eastern General, and to the wilderness area in Figgate Park along with some goldfinches. The wintering sea duck population of scoters, scaup, long-tailed duck and others was thought to be the largest in Western Europe, and during severe storms many sought shelter inland. Then the Figgate pond would be covered with scaup, widgeon and occasional pintails and shovellers.

The harder winters in those days brought larger flocks of redwings and fieldfares and summer migrants included chiffchaffs, willow warblers, whitethroats and sedge warblers, now reduced to one or two pairs of whitethroats and the occasional willow warbler.

Nowadays we have a resident population of grey-lag geese that have abandoned their migratory habit and colonized this area of Scotland, and Canada geese that have moved from the north of England. On a morning walk, 20-25 bird species can be seen and heard, varying with the seasons, from goosander (seen above on the pond) and goldeneye in the winter to dipper and heron all year round. The 'Figgy', with its burn, pond and some remaining wild undergrowth is still a great wildlife haven.

Tom Forsyth - Chairman, 'Friends of Figgate Park'

## OLD PARISH CHURCH BICENTENARY

**PORTOBELLO** Old Parish Church celebrates its Bicentenary in 2009, and to mark the occasion the congregation hope to raise £10,000 to re-build a kindergarten in Dwerebease, a village in Ghana. They are also planning a series of events from October 2008 to March 2009 and want to involve the local community as much as possible.

Were you, or do you know anyone who was, christened or married in Regent Street, Windsor Place or the Old Parish churches and would like to join in the cel-

ebrations? Where are the former members of the 30th Company Boys Brigade, Life Boys, 2nd Scouts, Cubs, Guides and Brownies, the Old Parish Youth Club run by Bob Young after WW2, and the Bible Class led by Charlie Grierson? You are invited to join in the celebrations of the history you helped to make.

If you would like to do so, or if you have any old photographs or artefacts that might be of interest, and which you are willing to lend, please contact Alex McDonald, Session Clerk on 0131 669 1331.

## SANDY SMITH - An appreciation

**ALEXANDER W H SMITH** was born in Aberdeen, where he graduated MA from the university. He and his wife Rosemary, and their three children, moved to Joppa in the early 1950s, and Sandy qualified as a primary teacher at Moray House. He retired in 1983 as Head Teacher at Mauricewood Primary School in Penicuik.



Sandy's great love was acting and he was well known locally as the Producer/Director of the Melville Music Hall Company, which started as a drama club, The Melville Players, set up by him in the 1960s at Portobello Old Parish Church in Bellfield Street (then called Melville Street). The company has performed dozens of Pierrot Shows and Old Time Music Hall to raise funds for charities and organizations in Portobello, Musselburgh and further afield, and at local community events.

Sandy also found time to be an active member of Portobello Community Council, of which he was Chairman in the mid-1990s, the East Edinburgh Crime Prevention Panel and the Community Festival Association.

Sandy was an engaging man who liked to get things done, but for the last two or three years he had suffered ill-health, which curtailed his activities, to his great frustration. His death on 21st April is a great loss to his family, friends and the local community.

Brenda Molony

## ADDITIONS TO COMMUNITY WEBSITE

**LOCAL** planning applications can now be viewed on the website at [www.porty.org.uk/planning](http://www.porty.org.uk/planning).

The Gallery has been expanded to include local artists, and others whose work features Portobello, including Allan Pendreigh, Martin Fowler and Evi Carmichael. Further collections are planned and suggestions for other local artists would be welcome.

There are also plans to host photographs and paintings relating to Portobello from the Capital Collections archive, part of the City Library and Information Service's Image Library.

Local events for inclusion in What's On should be notified to [events@porty.org.uk](mailto:events@porty.org.uk). The address for updating Groups information is [groups@porty.org.uk](mailto:groups@porty.org.uk).

## AMNESTY - LOCAL NEWS

**AMNESTY'S** China Campaign continues as a major issue in the run-up to the Olympic Games. Our local Group mounted a display in the Library window on China's appalling human rights record, especially capital punishment. Cards and letters of appeal are the core activity, with a petition by the Mothers of Tiananmen Square Victims being given priority.

Recent Special Actions have been in respect of cluster bombs, wider use of Taser weapons by police in England and Wales, and the humanitarian crises in Gaza. Gavin Strang MP has again been helpful in raising the first two issues with Government figures.

An Israeli Information Officer has assured Amnesty that Israel is carrying out all its policies on Gaza in a humanitarian way! Kenny MacAskill MSP has confirmed that there are no plans to extend the use of Tasers by Scottish police beyond current practice.

A new sub-group has been formed to write letters together, which may appeal to those who write on their own but would welcome company and support. Non-members of Amnesty are encouraged to join. The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 1st July. For more information, call Mary Jane Elton on 669 5129 or email [maryjane@camell.me.uk](mailto:maryjane@camell.me.uk)

The Portobello Amnesty Group meet on the third Monday of each month in the URC Hall or Vestry, Marlborough St. at 7.30pm. Why not drop in, without obligation - A warm welcome is assured.

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](mailto: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](mailto:maureen.child@edinburgh.gov.uk) Receive regular Reports by email or view on [www.porty.org.uk](http://www.porty.org.uk)

**Cllr STEPHEN HAWKINS, Liberal Democrat:**

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# ON THE PORTY YOUTH SCENE

THE Portobello Senior Youth Club still runs on Thursdays from 6-8pm at Portobello Community Centre. If you are aged 12 or over and attend a local school, why not drop in and see what's on offer, or just chill out in a friendly atmosphere.

The Junior Youth Club for Primary 6s and 7s runs on Tuesdays from 5.30-7pm in the Centre, with pool, cooking, football, arts and crafts, group games, Playstation, music and lots more on offer. This busy club attracts around 45 young people a week.

Porty Swim Centre is the place to be on Friday nights from 7-9pm. This club is for secondary age youngsters and for just £1 you have access to an exclusive swimming area, the Pulse Centre gym (with personal coaching), a chill out area with Playstation and Wii consoles, and a dance/workout session.

If you might be interested in joining in these activities, please get in touch and we can tell you more.

If you are a local adult and would like to get involved, we would be very happy to hear from you. As a Volunteer Youth Worker you will receive support and training and would be a highly valued member of our Youth Work team. We would also like to hear from anyone with basic joinery skills who would be willing to help repair a couple of things in the youth lounge.

For more information please contact Brian on 661 7463.

## PORTOBELLO HIGH HITS HEALTHY TARGET

PORTOBELLO High is the first secondary school in the Lothians to achieve the prestigious 'Stage 3' of the Health Promoting Schools programme after meeting the standards set by NHS Lothian.

A range of developments were carried out to make the school more health conscious and encourage pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles. Pupils lead a community clean-up, and a Junk Food Roadshow gave advice on healthy eating. Professional development for staff covered wide aspects of health, and on a whole-school health day pupils learned stress man-

agement, advanced study skills and examination preparation, alternative health options and basic first-aid.

Margaret Williamson, Principal Teacher of Home Economics, said: "We are delighted to celebrate being recognised as a 'health promoting' school. The staff work really hard to continue to make the school a healthier and happier place to learn, and we look forward to building on this success. I firmly believe that a school is not about the building, but about the people who are in it, and I am proud to be part of such a great school community at Portobello High."

## THE GEORGIA EIGHT



**EIGHT** Portobello High School pupils have gained scholarships to study for a year at various universities in Georgia, USA. There are only 70 scholarships on offer worldwide each year, which means that next session Portobello High School will fill over 11% of the total placements. The scholarships, provided by the Rotary Clubs of Georgia State, are each worth \$26,000.

Stephen Forfar, Grant McHenry, Lisa Martin, Brad Tait, Craig Dunn, Sophie Mancini, Sarah Spence and Rebecca Williamson will each choose their own courses of study. They will stay in halls of residence on campus, but will also be 'adopted' by host families who will support them in many ways. Feedback from previous participants has been very positive.

Depute Head, Stephen Reid said: "We will continue this link with the Georgia Rotarians for many years to come and thank them for their involvement in this programme, but also the Rotary Club of Portobello without whose support - especially that of Mr Ken Hart, their Youth Opportunities Co-ordinator - we would never have become involved in this exciting and rewarding 'exchange' programme".

## 'THE DREAM ROAD'

**THAT** is the theme of this year's Summer Holiday Club for children in P1-P7, run by the Covenanted Churches of Portobello; it will be held from 7th-11th July, 10am-12noon, at the Old Parish Church hall in Bellfield Street. The theme is based on the Olympics, Paralympics and Cultural Olympiad, and will feature crafts, games, drama and challenges - something for everyone. For more information and to register, call Nell Graham on 669 4351.

## DESIGN A SCHOOL



Photo by Karen Coombe

**TO** further their campaign for a new High School, Portobello for a New School (PFANS) and the Parent Council invited pupils from the school and its six feeder primaries to use their imaginations and design the school they would like to see built on Portobello Park in 2012. Over 300 entries were displayed at the Town Hall and judged by Sir Tom Farmer, Kenny MacAskill MSP and Sebastian Tombs of Architecture & Design Scotland.

Parent Council member and Queen Margaret University marketing lecturer Emma Wood whose students assisted in organising the show said, "We hope to involve the community in seeing all the positive things a community school could do for Portobello. After listening to the pupils and teachers, we feel they needed to be heard."

## MUSIC FUN



Photo by Brenda Molony

**TO** celebrate the growing local interest in fiddle playing, a Fun Fiddle Musical Open Day was held on 22nd March in St James Church hall. Thirteen adults and 11 girls and boys, led by Gica Loening and Jenny Gardner, entertained a small audience and clearly enjoyed the chance to perform.

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# SUMMER TENNIS

THE tennis courts in Joppa Grove will again be supervised over the six weeks of the school holidays, from 11am-6pm, Monday to Saturday, to allow children to 'pay and play'. This is a great opportunity to try your hand at tennis and in the past has been very popular with children and adults alike; there are generally some racquets available on loan from the supervisor. Over this busy period, booking is definitely recommended.

Members and their families are reminded that no children under 16 are permitted to play unsupervised, when the courts are not manned.

Highlights of last season included a record number of over 70 family memberships, and a very successful coaching programme, which ran over six weeks and was attended by 14 juniors. Some of these juniors continued with coaching at Craigmillar Park Tennis Club, and went on to play in the East of Scotland Under15 League matches.

Lowlights included a marked increase of vandalism in and around the courts and in the clubhouse, which has cost the club hundreds of pounds in replacement glass, repairs and renewals.

Marjorie Shepherd

## SUMMER FUN WITH POD

PLANS are under way for more summer events in Portobello organized by POD (Portobello Open Door): the Party Picnic on the Prom on Sunday 24th August, and a Hairspray sing-along film night in the Community Centre on Saturday 21st June, with details still to be announced of an Artwalk. For more information, or to join in and help, visit [www.the-pod.org](http://www.the-pod.org)

## YOUNG ORIENTEER PUTS PORTOBELLO ON MAP



PATRICK RYAN, aged 11, won first prize in his age group at the Jan Kjellstrom International Orienteering Championships, bringing home a magnificent trophy. The event is held in a different area of England each year, over four days on the Easter weekend. Despite blizzards and freezing conditions, thousands of competitors from all over Britain and Europe turned up. The first race was on the campus of Guildford University, the second on Leith Hill, in Surrey and the third in the Ashdown Forest, Sussex. On the fourth day, relay teams from clubs from Britain and other European countries battled it out in the mud and rain.

Patrick attends St John's Primary School. He is a keen middle-distance and cross-country runner, and he and his brother Tom, of Holy Rood High School, are members of Edinburgh Southern Orienteering Club (ESOC). Tom, 16, is a member of the Scottish Junior Orienteering Squad, and has been competing for Scotland for two years in National and International events.

ESOC runs events for all ages and abilities, in and around Edinburgh. Beginners are especially welcome. For further information, contact Janet Clarke, e-mail: [janetclr@aol.com](mailto:janetclr@aol.com) or tel: 225 7771, or visit [www.esoc.org.uk](http://www.esoc.org.uk)

PRUNING shrubs can be off-putting, but if you prune any shrub after flowering you'll never harm it (maybe lose next year's flowers at worst). It is necessary to keep a shrub within bounds, but also increases flowering by renewing older wood with fresh growth. If there are many stems coming up from ground level, cut a third of them down to the ground and each year after, do the same. Shred the prunings and use as a mulch to keep weeds down.

Hedges can also be cut now as long as nesting birds are not disturbed, so check first. If cut regularly the clippings will be small and soft, so either put down a large sheet and collect for composting, or let them lie under the hedge where they'll break down quickly. Remember to cut a hedge narrower at the top, in an A shape, otherwise it will spread over the years and lean out - not a good thing if it juts over a pavement.

Although it is time to plant seedlings of tender vegetables like courgettes outside, watch for late frosts, even if they have been hardened off, and have some newspaper, old net curtains or fleece ready to throw over them for a bit of protection.

I did try not to sow too many tomatoes but got carried away as usual, so I'll give some plants away to family and friends and even experiment planting a few outside: 'Sub Arctic Plenty' should do well, as the name implies - I'll let you know.

Edging a lawn doesn't need to be done often, but does make a garden look good even if you have weedy borders. I discovered this year that the new edge made the perfect spot for replanting blind daffodils (ones that didn't flower and are all leaves), so next year will be looking forward to borders edged in daffodils.

Remember, if you're going on holiday, to deadhead everything and you'll come back to lots of new flowers. I've done this many times and it always amazes me how sweetpeas, lupins, delphiniums, etc just bounce back. I also cut back any autumn flowering perennials like michaelmas daisies by half. It seems brutal, but is well worth it as you get more flowers in the end. Try it on one patch and see.

Our Open Days at 39 Nantwich Drive are on Saturday and Sunday, 2nd and 3rd August, 2-5pm. Entrance £1, concessions 50p. All proceeds to the charity Garden Organic. Anyone visiting last year may have seen the sign 'New front garden under design' - hopefully by August it will be finished!



with Susan Burns

## BEACH VOLLEYBALL

THE first leg of the 2008 Scottish Beach Volleyball Tour will take place at the foot of Bellfield Street on Saturday 14th and Sunday 15th June. There will be all standards of play, from recreational 4-a-side teams to the top players in Scotland, battling it out for four points and ultimately trying to be crowned Scottish Champions. Some players from the Scottish Tour will also be playing on the European and World Tours this summer.

## WELL DONE 'MARATHON MAN'!

LOCAL painter and decorator Malcolm Parry completed the London Marathon on 13th April in 4hrs 11mins, despite suffering from a bad cold. He raised over £2000 for Leukaemia Care and says: "I want to say a big 'thank you' to all who donated and came to the charity events, and all my friends and family who helped fund raise and supported me through a rigorous training program to get me to the finish line". Malcolm plans to run the Edinburgh Marathon in 2009.



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